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THE MESSAGE OF ETERNAL WISDOM

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA



SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH
MYLAPORE :: MADRAS - 4

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BY

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA




SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH
MYLAPORE, MADRAS.

1957

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

'THE MESSAGE OF ETERNAL WISDOM' is not a new publication. It is only a revised edition of what was published in 1922 under the title, 'The Complete Works of Swami Ramakrishnananda'. The only important change in the present edition is that in place of the old Introduction, we have substituted a new one, giving a more detailed account of the author's life. An Index, too, has been added.

'The Universe and Man' and 'The Soul of Man', the two important books in this collection, were also published separately as independent books before this. The former of these formed the opening lectures of Swami Ramakrishnananda when the first permanent building of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, was consecrated in 1907. They were published in book form in March, 1908. 'The Soul of Man' formed a series of four lectures delivered by the Swami during the Christmas of 1909, and was first published as a book in February, 1910.

The get-up of the present edition has been considerably improved.

It is hoped that lovers of Vedantic literature would extend a hearty welcome to this volume embodying the thoughts of a great disciple of Sri Rrma-krishna on the eternal verities of life.

MADRAS
November, 1938

}

PUBLISHER

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The special feature of this edition is a valuable addition to the body-matter of the book under the title "Sri Ramakrishna And his Mission", a lecture delivered by the Swami in 1900, on the birthday anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Deva, at the 'Ice House' on the Beasant Road, Madras.

Madras
March, 5, 1946 }
}

PUBLISHER.

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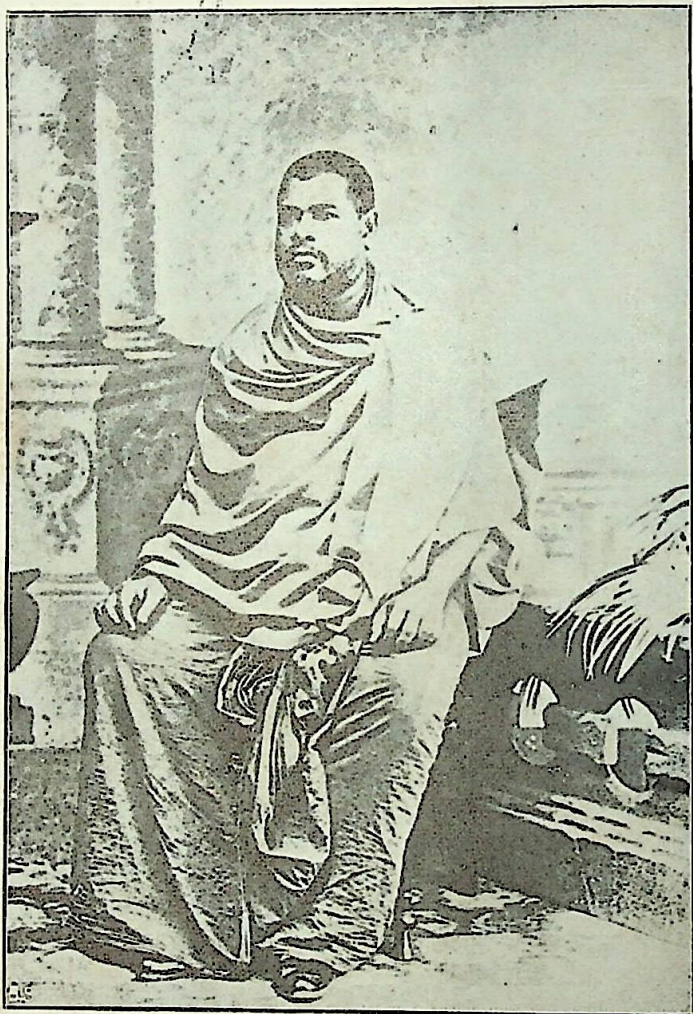
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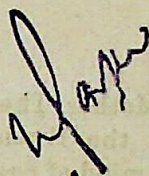
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Contentment is the only watch-word that can ensure us a safe passage through adverse circumstances. God is good. God does all. Therefore, He can do nothing but good. This is what all religions teach; abide by it and peace of mind will naturally follow.

—SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA



SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA



INTRODUCTION : A LIFE SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

1

AMONG the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda was undoubtedly the greatest. It was as a result of his life-work that the message of the Great Master received its first intellectual interpretation and the movement connected with his name, its initial start. In fact the Swami's achievements were so brilliant that it is difficult for the world at large to perceive the lesser luminaries by his side—his fellow-disciples and co-workers who faithfully helped him in consolidating his work and in giving it a permanent shape. Each one of these fellow-disciples of his, who had received the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, was in himself a man of high spiritual attainments, and several of them were deep scholars and thinkers too. Swami Ramakrishnananda, the author of the present volume, was one of these disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who combined in themselves profound spirituality with intellectual powers of a very high order.

Sasibhushan Chakravarty, as the Swami was known in his pre-monastic days, was born in an orthodox Brahmin family of Hoogly District of Bengal, in the year 1863. His father was a strict observer of religious traditions and a devout worshipper of the

Divine Mother, The early training under him therefore instilled the Hindu ideas of orthodoxy and devotion into the mind of Sasi from childhood. The growth of his mind in this respect seemed to receive a check when he went to Calcutta for education, but as later events proved, this set-back was only a temporary episode in his spiritual development. He was a brilliant student at college, and for a time his attention was exclusively centred in his studies. But this was not, however, to belong so. Spiritual unrest gradually drew him to the study of scriptures, and eventually to the Brahmo Samaj, then under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen who was noted for his spirituality and eloquence. Sasi became very intimate with the Brahmo leader, and was appointed private tutor to his sons. The contact with Keshab did not, however, bring him to that spiritual anchorage that he was at heart yearning for; for, as he said in later days. 'Keshab's preaching whetted his hunger but could never appease it'.

This appeasement was to come only after he met Sri Ramakrishna, his Great Master, in October 1883. On the particular day of meeting, Sasi, along with his cousin Sarat—he became Swami Saradananda later on—had gone to Dakshineswar to attend the annual celebration of their Brahmo Samaj organisation, which was being held there at the temple-garden. They took the opportunity to see the Master who was then staying there. Sasi and Sarat were received very kindly by Sri Ramakrishna. He talked with them freely, and in the course of the conversation told them how the spiritual life of many a young man is nipped in the bud by early marriage. The boys thereupon ques-

tioned him whether it was then wrong to marry, and in reply the Master asked them to take a certain book from the shelf and read aloud a particular passage from it. The passage consisted of quotations from the Bible, setting forth the following teachings of Christ on marriage: "For there are some eunuchs, which were born so from their mother's womb; there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He that is able to receive, let him receive," and St. Paul's words: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn." The master further asked Sasi whether he believed in God with form or without it. And Sasi answered frankly, "I am not certain about the very existence of God. So I am not able to speak one way or the other!" The Master was very much pleased at the reply.

Sasi was very much impressed with the Master even at the first interview, and thenceforth he became a frequent visitor to Dakshineswar. The charm of the life of renunciation and devotion gradually slackened his attraction for secular studies and the fine prospects it offered to a brilliant student like himself. Side by side, his admiration for Sri Ramakrishna grew into passionate love and reverence, and he began to devote more and more of his time to the service of the Master and the practice of devotional exercises under his guidance.

When Sri Ramakrishna fell ill in the latter part of 1885, about twelve of his young disciples banded

together into a group to stay with the Master and serve him, leaving their homes and studies for the time being. Sasi was one of them. During this period, Sasi was conspicuous, even among those devoted disciples, by his unflagging service of the Master. He attended upon him day and night like a shadow, without any consideration of sleep or rest for himself. While the other disciples spent a good deal of their time in devotional practices, Sasi waited by the side of the Master always, attending to his needs. This was his main spiritual practice, and by it he gained everything. The spirit of service to the Guru that he cultivated during this period became the dominant factor in his life till the end.

After the master passed away in August, 1886, Sasi joined the monastic brotherhood into which the young disciples formed themselves under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda. Henceforth Sasi was known as Swami Ramakrishnananda. It is said that Swami Vivekananda wanted to have this name for himself, but he conceded it to Sasi, feeling that he deserved it more than himself due to his unswerving devotion to the Master. And the subsequent life of Swami Ramakrishnananda very well justified this significant appellation. When Sri Ramakrishna passed away, the Swami had taken a vow that he would not desert his Master's ashes. True to this vow, for a long period of twelve years he never stirred from the neighbourhood of Baranagore monastery where the ashes of the Master were enshrined during those days. He devoted all his time to the service of the Master in the image just as he had served him in his physical body during his lifetime. His fellow disciples devoted them-

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selves to meditation and other spiritual practices while they were in the monastery, and very often they went out on itineracy to distant places of pilgrimage. Sometimes the monastery was even deserted, save for Swami Ramakrishnanada who kept unbroken vigil in the shrine dedicated to the Master. He brought water from the Ganges for daily worship, polished the altar vessels, gathered flowers, prepared food for offering to the Master, distributed the consecrated food among his brother disciples if there were any in the monastery, and went on day after day, quite unwearied, with this holy service. He could do this because he felt the living presence of the Master in the likeness of his that he worshipped. By his devoted service the Swami maintained the continuity of the monastery. In recognition of this Swami Vivekananda described him as the 'pillar of our Mission'.

II

This chapter of the Swami's life came to a close with 1897 when he was required by Swami Vivekananda to lead and organise the Ramakrishna Movement in Madras. The Swami was specially selected because of his orthodox ways of living, as well as for his proficiency both in Sanskrit and English—all of which were absolutely required for leading a religious movement in Madras at that time.

At Madras the Swami was first lodged in a small building near the Ice House, from where he had to shift to an apartment in the Ice House itself. A little later the Ice House was auctioned away by its owner, and the Swami had to stay for some time in an out-

house of the same building at great personal inconvenience. It was not until 1907 that a permanent house for the Math was constructed on a small site on the Brodies' Road, Mylapore, at a cost of Rs. 5500. The house was a simple one-storeyed building, tinted red, with a high foundation and a large terraced roof. It consisted of four rooms and a spacious hall that opened into a courtyard, in which stood another block containing the kitchen, the dining-room and the bath-room.¹ A close Madras follower of the Swami says: "The Swami was elated like a child to be inside the new building. He said, 'This is a fine house for Sri Ramakrishna to live in. Realising that he occupies it, we must keep it very clean and very pure.' We should take care not to disfigure the walls by driving in nails or otherwise."

The Swami's life in Madras was by no means a bed of roses. He had to work hard, and often face financial situations of a critical nature. In his early days he had to be his own servant and cook. Besides, he had to conduct the service in the shrine, which was of a rather elaborate nature, receive visitors, go about collecting funds for the permanent building, and conduct classes in various parts of the city. On certain days of the week he had to conduct as many as three classes at a time, and he would return quite tired and unfit to cook. Want of funds for the maintenance of the Math was also a frequent cause of trouble for him. But he remained unmoved by such circumstances, and never approached anyone for help. When his patience

¹ This building has since then been demolished. The site of it is included in the compound of the present Math building at Madras.

was sorely tried, he complained of his condition to his Master in moods of exalted devotion, and resigned himself to the Divine will. Those who moved with him intimately at Madras say how in such situations they had sometimes heard him importuning his Master in the shrine like a child, and how, when he was at his wit's end to secure the provisions necessary for the daily offering, help used to come unsolicited and in ways that seemed miraculous. Matters improved towards the latter part of his stay in Madras. He got other monastic members to assist him in the work, and the financial condition of the Math also brightened a little.

In all, the Swami laboured in Madras for about fourteen years, till he fell ill of consumption in 1911 and was removed to Calcutta for treatment. There he passed away after two months of illness. During this ministry of fourteen years, the Swami laid secure the foundations of the Ramakrishna Movement in South India. Almost all the items of work conducted by the Madras centre were begun by him. He instituted the worship of the Master with due ceremonies and proper observances. By the printing of 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna', 'The Inspired Talks' and some of his own works embodied in this volume, he began the publication work of the Madras centre. Besides, he wrote a book in Bengali on Sri Ramanuja, and had the plan of writing a book in Sanskrit reconciling the systems of philosophy propounded by the three great Acharyas. He began the public celebrations of the birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda with a full day programme of Bhajana, lectures and feeding of the poor, in the last of which

especially he took the greatest delight. He took charge of a helpless orphan boy whose relatives had all perished of plague at Coimbatore. This was the beginning of the Ramakrishna Students' Home, which has since then developed into one of the most famous educational institutions for poor boys in South India.

Besides working in the city of Madras, the Swami went on lecturing tours to several towns in the South. Especially noteworthy are his visits to Bangalore and Trivandrum, the premier cities of the two most important Native States of South India, both of which have since become prominent centres of the Ramakrishna Movement. In 1904, he founded a permanent centre in Bangalore, and left it under the charge of Swami Atmananda.

III

Swami Ramakrishnananda was a man of gigantic proportions, and was always, an imposing figure in spite of his indifference to personal appearance. His features, however, were plain save when they were lighted by his smile that transfigured them and lent them a rare spiritual beauty.

As a teacher the Swami was shy of appearing in public or of making speeches, although when he made one it used to be very effective. He was, however, not an eloquent speaker, not even a fluent one. But without any oratorical subterfuge for stirring his hearers, he could make himself quite impressive. He was always at his best in the conversational method of teaching. He never counted his audience, nor did he measure out his inspiration according to the number

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of his listeners. Whether he was speaking to two or two hundred or two thousand, the same ardour gave force and warmth to his words.

He was very regular in his habits and simple in his ways of life. It was his invariable practice to begin the day with the reading of the Gita and the Vishnu-sahasranama. His whole life at the Math was one of incessant worship and service. He was in the habit of giving some Prasadam (consecrated food) to every visitor to the Math.

He was a strict vegetarian and very orthodox in his daily life. In his boyhood he read a book on Sri Gauranga, and from that time onwards used to observe the restrictions of diet prescribed by him for aspirants. His Master encouraged him in his orthodox habits, knowing that it was specially conducive to spiritual growth in his case. He was also particular to partake only of such food as he offered to his Master. In later days he had an attack of diabetes, and doctors therefore prescribed to him wheat diet; but he refused to abide by such diet restrictions, because he could not offer wheat to Sri Ramakrishna, as he was never in the habit of taking wheat in his lifetime.

So also he accepted the codes of Manu and of other great law-givers as wholly good and true, because he believed that these great men were without any selfishness and were therefore incapable of producing books that were injurious to humanity. His Hindu orthodoxy did not, however, make him narrow-minded in the least. He had the greatest respect for other religions and mixed freely with their followers whenever occasions arose. At Madras, when he visited St. Thomas Mount, he went to the church there in all

reverence to offer prayers. If any Muslim visited him, he was in the habit of discoursing with him upon the Koran.

Another aspect of his Hindu orthodoxy was his devotion to external worship with elaborate rituals and offerings. As it has been said, he was a worshipper by right of birth. His English education had at first a corrosive influence on his zeal in this respect, but association with the Master restored his old faith. As we have seen, the up-keep of the shrine was one of his main interests in life, and for many years he conducted the worship with unwavering ardour. His fervour of spirit was specially manifested at the time of special worship on festival days. The autumnal worship of the Divine Mother is an occasion which calls for continous worship during twentyfour hours. Generally this long interval is divided among several celebrants, but Swami Ramakrishnananda would take his place before the altar at six o'clock in the morning of the festival and remain there until six the next morning without moving from his seat. His brothers in the Order admired his endurance and his zeal in worship, but sometimes in humorous moods they would banter him for his old-fashioned bell-ringing ways. He, however, remained unmoved by all this. Not that he considered rites and ceremonies of primary importance; he knew they were only secondary, but they were to him the hallowed channels of religious expression, and as such something to be preserved and honoured.

In fact there was in the Swami a perfect balance between intellectualism, contemplativeness and emotional devotion of a violent type. A good mathematician.

and an erudite scholar, he possessed intellectual powers of a very high order, of which the present book is itself a proof. But he made no display of his learning, nor did he allow it to overshadow his spiritual vision. Religion was his vocation; his intellectual pursuits were his recreation. Being an able mathematician, a problem in trigonometry was to him like a game of chess, and a difficult passage in a Sanskrit text what a book of adventure would be to a young boy. His study was, however, more interior than outer. The book he read most frequently was the book of his own mind. He delved into its depths and forced it to yield up its secrets. Thus he was able to reach his own solution for many psychological problems. The results of these direct observations were mostly wordless, too subtle to put into words; but occasionally he spoke of them.

His intellectualism was, however, wholly subordinate to spirituality. He was well-versed in Advaitic philosophy, and his inner being was always turned towards the truth of the unity of existence. But he did not speak of Advaita to all and sundry. though when people of that temperament went to him he did freely discourse on that topic. This undertone of philosophic serenity and aloofness in him was marked by careful observers. One of them writes: "An atmosphere of aloneness enveloped, Swami Ramakrishnananda. It was not created by lack of companionship.The impression sprang, I believe, from his unconditional detachment. It was so complete that it insulated him. I do not know whether he was conscious of it or not. We never spoke of it specifically, but one day I made a passing reference to

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it and his decisive reply was : 'I am full of God; what need have I of any one else.'" A few days after he further said to the same writer : "Aloneness means singleness, purity. It also means fearlessness. When there are two, there is always fear.when we are alone, we can dance or sing, or make faces, or do whatever we like. But let a friend come, and at once we begin to be careful of what we do. There comes a sense of constraint. We grow self-conscious. Fear exists when there is duality, fearlessness exists when there is only one. Since we cannot be happy so long as we fear, we shall not be able to find peace until we can say, 'I am alone, I need nothing'."

It was this undercurrent of Advaitic consciousness that formed the basis of his devotional spirit, distinguishing it from the surface emotionalism common among men who pass generally as devotees. Ordinarily he was very calm, serene and introspective, but in two situations, when the devotional core in him was touched, he grew violently emotional. One was when he happened to notice in those about him any disloyalty to the ideal, negligence or carelessness in the Lord's service, disrespect towards that which was sacred and holy, hypocrisy and insincerity. These were the things that roused him as they did the prophets of old. The other was when he listened to devotional music. He would at first be listening, calm and composed, but by and by the devotional spirit in him would burst out, ending in wild ecstatic dance into which even those about him would irresistibly be drawn. Many had also noticed him falling into ecstatic moods while worshipping in some of the great temples of South India.

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In daily life, his spirit of devotion manifested as: unyielding faith in the Lord, whole-hearted surrender to His will, and unconditional devotion to the Master, who was to him identical with the Supreme. We have already seen how the worship of the Master in his likeness was the pivot round which his devotional life turned since the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna. There was no mechanical conventionality about his worship; for he felt the living presence of the Master in his likeness, and his worship therefore partook of the nature of a spontaneous service to a beloved person in flesh. He would feed and clothe the likeness of the Master; he would put it to sleep; he would fan it for hours in the noon. Once, it is said, while he was staying in a dilapidated building in Madras, it rained suddenly at night. So he stood the whole night with an umbrella protecting his Master's likeness that had been installed in a leaking corner, lest he should disturb the Lord's sleep if he removed his picture to another place. Sister Devamata, an American Devotee who had ample opportunity to witness the intensity of his devotion to the Master, writes of him as follows:—

“There was no place in his consciousness for anything but the Master. What St. Paul declared in his Epistle to the Galatians—‘yet not I, but Christ liveth in me’—described perfectly Swami Ramakrishnananda's attitude towards himself and towards that one whom he called Guru (Master). He was dead wholly to himself and alive only in Sri Ramakrishna. His coming and going, his eating and sleeping, his labour and his teaching, his entire living, took their rise in the will of the Master, never in his own desire or convenience.

XX.

Those who saw him carry his Master's picture, pressed close to his heart, his body bent over it in protection, as he walked through the rain from the carriage to the entrance of the new Math at Mylapore, when he moved the shrine from the Ice House, could appreciate the tenderness of love, the power of devotion for his Guru, which transfused his being. He could say of his Master as truly as did St. Paul of his, 'The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God.' "

It is difficult to give a pen-picture of spiritual greatness for it is too subtle and evasive for words to describe. All that can be said of Swami Ramakrishna-nanda, as of his great Master, is that in his personality were harmoniously combined—knowledge, devotion and spirit of service. The best description of him is to be found in his own words addressed to a disciple in a meditative mood: "My life is eternal. This little life belongs to God. He created it. Let Him do with it what He will."

TO
HIS SERVENT HONOR
THE SWAMI BRAHMANANDA
THE UNIVERSE AND MAN
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED BY
HIS DEVOTED SERVANT
RAMAKRISHNANANDA

TO
HIS SERENE HOLINESS
THE SWAMI BRAHMANANDAJI
PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION,
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED BY
HIS DEVOTED SERVANT
RAMAKRISHNANANDA

I

THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

THE message of Sri Ramakrishna may be summed up in a very few words. He says that all religions are but different paths leading to the same goal. It requires no little effort on the part of men to understand this. Although it is the simplest of all assertions, still it is the boldest; for no religionist will admit its truth. Religion, as it is practised, is altogether different from religion, as it *should* be practised. There is no religionist now-a-days who does not hold that the religion he believes in and practises is *the* religion, and that all other religions are irreligions. This is the case not only with Hinduism, each sect of which wants to prove that it alone stands for truth and that the other sects only preach nonsense, but also with Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and other religions. When such is the case with all the religions of the world, to say that these are but different paths leading to the same goal—God—may appear on the face of it absurd. Yet that is the message which Sri Ramakrishna has brought to the world.

This morning my aim will be to prove rationally that even such is the fact. In order to do so, I shall take each religion, analyse it, and point out to you that every one of them leads to the same goal. Let me begin with our own, the mother of all religions, Hinduism.

The Hindus are divided into very many sects; there are many systems of religion here. For instance, there are over twenty-five commentaries on the Vedanta Sutras, and each commentary has its own following. The principal systems are those of Sri Madhvacharya, Sri Ramanujacharya and Sri Sankaracharya. I can point out to you that these philosophies, although they differ considerably in their method of expounding the Universe, are still one and the same in their practical method; they point in the same direction and towards the same goal.

Let me take up the system of Sri Madhvacharya. According to this great philosopher, three things—matter, soul and God—are eternal, self-existent and uncreated. The souls have been placed between matter on the one hand, and God on the other. The souls are good, bad, or mixed, and being infinitesimally small, they are very weak. Now religion begins with these souls. With matter on the one hand and God on the other, where are these souls to go? Their natural inclination is to go towards matter. "God has created the souls in such a manner that they have always got an outgoing tendency; for He has placed all their senses outside" (Katha Upanishad). They see that happiness alone can make them perfectly satisfied, and that their highest goal is the realisation of eternal happiness. But they seek happiness only through the senses, and the senses readily please man. Now, however much a person may crave for eternal life, if he identifies himself with the senses, and through them with the body, he is bound to feel misery when the body is miserable, and die when the body dies. Though it is a fact that the soul is eternal by its very nature,

yet it forgets this on account of its foolish identification with the body.

In the verse, "*Nityuh sarvagatah sthanurachaloyam sanatanah*," the soul has been described as everlasting, immovable, motionless, eternal and existing everywhere. This is the monistic definition. But according to Madhvacharya's system, the soul is Anu or infinitesimally small. These souls are many, and they find place in the all-pervading Soul of God and cannot be counted. Being so very small, their powers also are necessarily limited and insignificant. They have some strength, but more weakness. Therefore they have no power to know their own eternal nature. For this reason there should always be one infallible being by the side of such helpless and weak souls to guide them properly. This infallible soul goes by the name of 'Guru or spiritual preceptor. The duty of every individual is to be directed by such Gurus. Sri Madhvacharya says, "I am that Guru".

The natural propensities of every individual are towards matter. By a process of correct discrimination, the tendency of the soul may be directed towards that which is not matter, i. e., towards spirit. Man is attracted by the charm of matter. It is out of matter that his body and all things that are attractive and charming have been brought into existence; also the bodies of parents, wife, children, friends and countrymen have come out of matter. Out of matter have come into existence all beautiful scenery; and all savoury dishes are produced out of it. Now if it is difficult to give up one's own wife, children and friends and one's love for these, it is difficult to give up

matter. Every formal entity is material; hence matter-worship is natural to man.

But this worship of my body and all other bodies will never give me that which I desire most. Why do I serve a certain man? Because by serving him I expect to get something I want. Every service is prompted by some such private gain. We want to live, and we hate death. Even the most healthy and sensible man will certainly become the victim of old age one day, however careful he might be in preserving his health. These are plain facts, and yet they are not perceived. Yudhishtira said, "What is most wonderful in this Universe is that every day thousands and thousands die, and still people seem to think that they are an exception to the rule."

Thus you see that whatever might be our natural propensities, we are led to an entirely different way of valuing things when we analyse our environment. We find that this so-called life, this combination of body and soul, is not so desirable a thing. I am naturally deathless. Love of matter does not enable me to love God. In my true nature I am only a dweller in this body; the body and myself are not one and the same. It is because I forget this fact that I identify myself with the body, bring myself down to the most material condition, and regard myself as a being three and a half cubits in length, full of weakness, physical and mental.

Such analysis can direct the mind of man towards his own real nature and towards Him who is his real friend through eternity. Madhvacharya says that though the Universe is made up of three factors—matter, souls and God—still these are independent

existences. Our goal is God. Real happiness and real wisdom, He alone can give. In order to go to Him we must go away from the world. We belong to God and not to matter, since we are spirit. How are we to go to God? This world, this Universe, is infinite in every way. Its age is eternal, and its extent is infinite; even the swiftest locomotive engine can never take me out of space. But in order to go to God, I must go out of the world, because God is extra-cosmic. How? Here, all Aryan philosophers agree. Sri Madhva says: I am distinct from the world; so I can separate myself from it by closing the gateway of my senses. Thus I can go towards God. Let me analyse a portion of the world to find out its nature, for it is like understanding the nature of the ocean by analysing a few drops of its water. Take, for instance, the chair before me: it has form, hardness, etc.; and form, touch and taste exist so long as there are eyes, skin, and tongue, by which we perceive them. In this way, if the world is full of phenomena, no phenomenon can exist without the corresponding sense of perception. I, too, must be one of the factors by which all these have come into existence. If I can separate myself in any way from these then the world of phenomena will vanish.

But Madhvacharya also believes in the indestructible nature of phenomena when he localises them in the eternal and infinite mind of God. Coming down, however, to the individual mind limited by space and time, he admits their destructible nature. The matter behind all these may be eternal. But phenomenon in itself is not eternal, for it can be split up into two factors. The moment you get rid of phenomena, you get rid of the Universe. How? Sit down in a conven-

ient posture, relax your limbs, shut your eyes, and sit steadily: thus you can get away from the external world. This is very easy, but there is another world, the mental world, which is the shadow of this world, and the recorder of all the past and the future. For the past world and the future world are all in the mind. It is not so difficult to get rid of, even the present world. How then to get rid of the past and the future-world? Yet you have to go beyond all this in order to reach God. So Madhvacharya says that you must bring your mind under your control. Even the mind cannot reach Him. God is infinite. For man who regards himself as possessing a form, it is difficult to love God who is formless. But when he remains absorbed in the thought-world, he totally forgets name and form. Only when man gets away from the world does he come in contact with spirit. It is naturally difficult for him to give up the world and all its enchantments. It appears to him as something next to impossible. But it is an illusion. So Bhagavan Madhvacharya has asked all his disciples to search after God beyond the world, beyond one's own mind, but not beyond the skies; for you can never go beyond the skies.

Now let us come to Sri Ramanujacharya. He also holds the same view. But according to him, matter, souls and God are inseparably connected; whereas according to the dualistic system of Sri Madhva, they are separate, and as such the soul can completely separate itself from the other two. This is the difference. All the innumerable souls make up the mind of God. God is the central point. He is intracosmic, and not, as in Madhva's system, extracosmic.

THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

9

He is Antaryamin, the in-dweller. He is in cosmos. He is behind every atom, also in the atom. In spite of this difference, the practical philosophy here is the same. For, whether God is extra-cosmic, or intra-cosmic, He is not the cosmos. So if you are to go to God and get what you really want, you have to go away from the world. You can cut off your connection with the world; for you come in contact with it only through your senses, through the organs of knowledge and through the organs of action. If you want life and wisdom, God alone and nothing else in the Universe can give you these. He is the proprietor and you are the property. Since all that you want can be had from God, seek him. Thus you see that though these philosophies differ in theory, they are one and the same in practice. They say, "Go back to your mind; nay, even go beyond your mind."

Let us now come to Sri Sankaracharya. His philosophy is of course different from the other two philosophies. According to him, the world of phenomena or the Universe is something which cannot be defined exactly, since it is constantly changing. It has some sort of reality, which cannot be called existent or non-existent; for if it has any real existence, it can never become non-existent, as in that case something will have to be nothing, which is absurd. But, as a matter of fact, every moment it is dying and giving birth to a new state of affairs; so it cannot be called existent or non-existent. Nor can it be both simultaneously; for how can a thing be permanent and impermanent at the same time? Sankara uses the term Maya to indicate that such is the nature of the Universe. So much regarding the

known. Coming back to the knower, the self, indicated by the first personal pronoun, if I put such a question as Who am I?—the answer at once comes that I am a man of many wants. This is because I wrongly identify myself with the ever-changing body. Sankara has proved in several ways the perfect nature of the soul analytically. I am not my body. It is mine. I am not identical with it. This individual is made up of three factors—the body, the mind, and the self or ego behind the other two. The first two are changeable; the third is changeless, for there has been no break in the self-identity from babyhood to the present time. Now change means death of one and birth of another, exit of one and entrance of another, end of one and beginning of another. Hence changeless means beginningless and endless, or in other words, eternal. So the 'I' behind body and mind is eternal. Sankara shows again that that which is eternal must also be infinite, and he thus proves the infinite and eternal nature of the soul. He also proves the unity of the soul. There cannot be two infinities. My self means the real Self behind the body and the mind. This is true with regard to every other creature. Behind the body and behind the mind of every one the Self is one. This is Advaita Vada or the monistic system. "Oh beloved, when there was no creation, there was only one Soul existing, one alone without a second." These individual souls are the shadows of that one eternal Soul. The Self is not outside me, it is inside. "That which words cannot describe, where the mind cannot reach, that is the all-blissful Self."

It may be noted here that the individual soul has been regarded by other philosophies as smaller than

the smallest, whereas Sankara has proved it to be bigger than the biggest. Two extremes meet. Now it is a fact whatever is smaller than the smallest is the same as bigger than the biggest. Such is the teaching of the Upanishads. If we dive a little deep, we find no difference. Sri Madhvacharya and Sri Ramanujacharya can be understood by all. Sankara can be understood only by very thoughtful people. But they all take us to the same goal, the same perfection, through the same processes. They do not differ in practical life.

Now let us go out of India to Palestine, where God first revealed Himself to Moses. According to this great seer, God is only one. Out of Him all souls and the whole Universe have come into existence. His thought has brought into existence everything. Moses did not believe in the eternity of the other two existences, matter and soul. Only God is eternal. The duty of every man is to worship him, to know Him as the author of his being. To go to Him, you must go away from all. He has brought into existence the Universe, the angels and all the other souls. Our primary duty should be to go to Him, by moving away from these. God must be obeyed and meditated upon. He speaks through His prophets and through the conscience of all human beings as the one internal monitor of all. So the more you go inward, the more you go towards God and the less you commit blunders. His is a religion of devotion. God helps all those who are devoted to him. He formed man in His own image out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Moses preached Karma or work, and not so much of Jnana, or knowledge; that is, he preached obedience to the com-

mandment of God and not a whole-souled devotion to Him. But as he taught the service of God above all and the distinctness of God from His creation, according to his system, too, we must go away from the world in order to serve Him, *i.e.*, we must go inside ourselves,

Then Christ came and preached Jnana, or that wisdom which teaches men to know God as the greatest thing, and to love Him with the whole heart, mind and soul, as the highest duty. He did not preach Karma so much as Moses had done before him. Moses was more Rajasika or active, according to our view, than Christ. Christ was Sattvika; he was much more introspective than Moses. Moses realized God outside himself (in a bush), But Christ realized the Kingdom of Heaven inside himself. If that Kingdom is inside you, God is inside yourself, You must then go inside yourself to love Him with all your mind, with all your heart and with all your soul, and must worship Him enthroned in your heart. The process taught both by Moses and Christ, therefore, was also the same as that taught by Sankara and others, You must go inside yourself to realize God.

The same thing was preached later by Mohammed. Mohammed was a great devotee of God. He could not reconcile himself to the religion which was then in vogue in his country, He used to go to the Syrian markets with the images of gods, and he would reflect within himself, "How can these be God? For He cannot be created by man." Later on, when he was employed as a shepherd by Khadija, while his flocks were grazing, he used to meditate upon God and pray to Him for illumination in the cave of Mount Hara.

near Mecca. One day, by the grace of God, illumination came, when in a moment he went to the seventh heaven, led by the angel Gabriel. It is said that although he blindfolded himself with seven layers of cloth, still he could not get rid of the light of illumination. This story shows that Mohammed's light was that of inner illumination, that is, his inner mind was illuminated by wisdom. From that day onward, words of wisdom came out of him, which the wisest men of those days could not utter. When we study the Koran, we cannot fail to hear the direct words of God pouring out of the heart of Mohammed, the illiterate prophet. He was not at all educated in books, still his words were so impressive, so chaste and well-chosen, that the idea of God using him as His mouthpiece is forced upon one. This is very clear proof that real knowledge is to be found inside the self, beyond the region of the individual mind, as there alone can the universal mind of God sit supreme above all the minds of His creatures.

From what has already been said, we came to know that there is only one path, the path of introspection of going back inside one's own self, to realize the highest truth. There is no other path. And when Christ said, "I am the only path," he was perfectly right; for by Christ we understand not the man, but the human embodiment of God. Yes, man shall have to merge his individuality in the ocean of Divinity in order to attain to Christhood or sainthood, or to become the Son or the other self of God. That Son of God was born not only in Jerusalem, but he comes everywhere. "Whenever there is the decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and the exaltation of unrighte-

ousness, then I incarnate Myself." The infinite God becomes formful, an Avatara Purusha or incarnate Divinity.

Now let us again come back to India and analyse a new sort of religion, which is generally regarded as atheistic. I mean the religion of Buddha. Although ordinarily it is understood to be intensely rationalistic, still its goal is the same as that of Hinduism. As Swami Vivekananda said, Buddha was only a rebel child of Hinduism. He was a Hindu at heart. When he was young he observed that life was subject to decay and misery, and he wanted to find out a life which would be eternally blissful and perfect. So he ran away from his palace, and in the solitude of the forest he began to seek a path to eternal life which would enable him to escape death. He almost abstained from taking any food and reduced himself to a skeleton. One day he heard music somewhere at a distance. The purport of the song was that this living body is a *Vina*, and that if it is stringed with sufficiently strong strings and tuned to a proper pitch, it would produce blissful music. But the strings would snap asunder if they are overstrung, and would produce no music if kept loose. This was a very good hint to him. He determined to give up his austerities, and his first need was to eat something. It so happened that just at that time a lady was waiting for him with a golden dish full of *Payasam*. She prostrated and placed it before him and went away. He ate it with good relish and threw away the golden pot in the stream. Evening set in. Silence prevailed all round. He saw a mower, and from him he obtained a bundle of tender grass. After making a cushion-like seat by spreading the

grass over the ground, he looked towards all directions. Then he stepped on the seat and sat there with this determination: "Let my body get dried upon this seat; let my skin, my flesh, my bones be destroyed here. I am not going to rise up from this seat without realizing that wisdom for which I have been struggling for many lives." Then he closed all the organs of his senses. In the first part of the night terrible noises were heard by him. In the second part wild beasts threatened to fall upon him; and grim figures of ghosts and spirits tried to terrify him. But he knew that these were all the work of Mara, the Prince of Darkness, and he heeded them not. The enemy of man then tried to appeal to his softer nature. He appeared before Buddha in the form of his old father, weeping and crying. "O my son, I am now so poor and helpless; come to my help. Do you not love me?" Buddha calmly said, "Mara, this is all thy doing." Then appeared the form of his weeping wife with her darling child on her lap. Ah! those appealing eyes! Even a heart made of stone would melt away to see them. But prince Siddhartha, as the Buddha was then known, did not lose his equanimity, knowing full well that this too was the work of Mara. In the third part of the night he found that all the powers were coming to him, the power to go to all the Lokas or spheres, as also the eight Siddhis or miraculous powers. The Gods from the highest spheres came down to invite him to their places, but he did not listen to them. In the fourth part of the night he pierced through, and transcended, all the spheres, and then he entered into the one unbroken and absolute wisdom which is characterised by eternal

peace and bliss and by total extinction or Nirvana of ignorance. Day-break, in the meantime, had ushered into the physical universe the all-glorious sun, while the all-illuminating sun of wisdom lighted the heart of Buddha with the ravishing splendour of Nirvana. The inner and the outer Universe were both bathed in blissful light. There was profound gladness everywhere.

Buddha was so much enamoured of the tree under whose shade he had realized Nirvana that he went round it many a time in gratefulness. When the first wave of his transport had passed off, he began to think whether to keep the all-blissful wisdom confined within himself, or proclaim it to all people and make them enjoy it as well. His all-loving soul preferred the latter course. He resolved to preach and make known everywhere what he had realized. His first proselytes were some ungrateful disciples who had left him at a time when he needed their help very much, during the period of his severe austerities. For when the peaceful Buddha slowly emerged from the wilderness, he first saw them at a distance. They also perceived him coming towards them, and one of them said, "I will never offer him a seat." Another said, "I will not give him even a pitcher of water." Still another said, "I will not care to talk to him politely." Slowly and silently Buddha approached them. Then he who said that he would not offer him a seat was the first to offer him one; and he who said that he would not give him a pitcher of water was the first to bring him water. Strangely enough, they had to do exactly what they did not want to do. He preached

first at Gaya, then at Benares, and then at other places.

He preached the same goal that was preached by Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhvacharya,—the eternal peace, the unbroken bliss and the complete annihilation or Nirvana of all miseries. To do this you have to go inside yourself, where neither language nor thought can ever reach. He did not preach a personal God, but he preached Karma. Good Karma brings good results, and bad Karma bad. Hence give up all bad Karmas. He was a preacher of good Karmas, and so indirectly he preached God. There is no Karma or action without a Karta or actor. Hence if he preached good Karma, he must also have preached a good Karta. Here all our works cannot be perfect. No man is perfect. So he who is absolutely good must be God. If Lord Buddha held out an ideal of good Karma, he must also have held out an ideal of good Karta. How to realise that God who is indicated by the abstract term, 'good Karma'? By performing good and unselfish actions and thus placing oneself in harmony with the Law. Here also the theme is the same. Man should be introspective, if good actions must proceed from inside him. The more you go inside yourself in meditation, the more you minimize attachment towards sensual pleasures and gain the power to realise Nirvana. This is what Lord Buddha preached.

In expounding Hinduism and Buddhism to you, I have expounded Jainism and the systems of Nanak, Kabir, Dadu, Loatze and others as well; for they are more or less analogous to them. Let us now take Zoroastrianism. Here also the method of realisation

is the same. Ahura Mazdah is the living God of the whole Universe. He is full of all good qualities. He is the eternal enemy of Ahriman, the power of darkness. He is the light that lights the soul. Our duty should be to realise that light in ourselves and give up all association with Ahriman, the blind power that leads men astray.

Thus, after analysing the various religions of the world, we see that, although they proceed from different personalities, and may apparently differ, they all lead to the same goal. Similarly the one God has several names—Ishvara, Vishnu, Allah. This is what has been realised by Sri Ramakrishna Deva. The experiences of that sage, who, you know, was an illiterate man, harmonise with the perfectly rational interpretation of the religious experiences of the world. We have no right now to regard the religion in which I am born or you are born as *the* religion, and all other religions as no religions. It is not possible for me here to analyse properly even one religion. Study deeply and see for yourselves the truth of what I have tried to expound. After what has been said, it is beyond doubt that every religion is a path leading to the same goal—God. There are as many paths leading to God as there are individuals in the Universe. Every man has to select his own path.

Every man has the same longing for eternal happiness and wisdom, or in other words, for the realisation of God. Hence religion, which is impartially disposed towards all beings like a mother towards her children is bringing eternal peace to the low as well as the high. This is clearly exemplified in our own Sanatana Dharma,¹ the mother of all religions. Ours is a uni-

versal religion. Its greatest expounder, Sri Krishna, has declared, "Whoever seeks to realise Me in whatever manner, I enable him to realise Me in that manner." Thus the ideal of every religion is perfect in itself, and the method of realisation is in every case similar. Born as we are in such a grand, universal religion, it is our duty to regard other religions as we regard our own. Our religion includes the religious experiences and the religious consciousness of the whole world throughout all times. Hence, by honouring all religions only we can be true Hindus. But it is better for a man to die in the religion in which he is born than to leave it to take up another religion. We must not go against the grain of our nature, for nature has been described as a kindly mother who gradually leads the baby to the goal. To go against her would be committing the worst of all blunders. This is what has been preached by Sri Ramakrishna Deva. He has asked the Christian to be a true Christian, the Moham-
 medan to be a true Mohammedan, the Visishtadvaitin (qualified non-dualist) to be a true Visishtadvaitin, the Advaitin (monist) to be a true Advaitin. He says, "Whoever is true to his own religion will ultimately reach God."

II

THE UNIVERSE

THE Universe, both inner and outer, has been the subject of modern science and philosophy. Chemistry physics, zoology, botany, geology and astronomy treat more or less of the outer Universe. Chemistry wants to find out the elements whose innumerable combinations have brought into existence the countless objects that make up the Universe, while physics tries to discover those laws that regulate it. Zoology treats of the animal kingdom, while botany deals with the vegetable kingdom. Geology tries to find out the inner formation and nature of our earth, whereas astronomy, in right earnest, seeks to know all about the heavenly bodies, their relative distances, the period of their revolving motions and so on. In fact it wants to know all about the Universe. Physiology enters inside our physical self. There it discovers how food-stuff is transformed into blood, how the latter is made to circulate all over the body by the contraction and expansion of the heart, how in the course of its circulation it meets the wants and excretes the waste of all the tissues and organs of our body. Psychology in turn treats of our finer self, the mind. And philosophy finally dives still deeper and wants to know something about our souls and their relation to the Universe.

THE UNIVERSE

21

So science is struggling hard to unravel the mystery of creation; let us see with what success. It has proved beyond all doubts the indestructibility of matter. It has analysed the human mind and believes in its unextended immaterial nature. It has no definite answer about the nature of our souls. As regards a creator, it is either sceptic or agnostic. So far as this aspect of its researches is concerned, the result is not at all satisfactory. But in course of time it may be expected to define more clearly its ideas respecting mind, soul and God.

Let us, however, see whether science at any time will be able to know all about the Universe. All scientific researches are based upon ordinary sense perception, which holds the outer Universe to be an independent existence, *i.e.*, something quite independent of mind. Whether we are conscious of it or not, it exists. It also holds that we derive all our knowledge about it through our sense organs and garner them in our minds. Now, it is also a fact that the Universe is infinite in every way, for we can never imagine the limit of space in which it is located. If we start in a railway train with incredible velocity to find out the end of space in any direction whatever, it will not be possible for us to come to the limit even at the end of several years; for there will remain space enough to travel still further. Material particles being both infinitely scattered and indestructible, the Universe which is made out of them must also be infinite and indestructible as well, although sometimes it may remain in a manifested and sometimes in an unmanifested condition. But it is always eternal and infinite in its nature.

Now, as regards our physical self, we are merely three and a half cubits in length. In regard to our mental self also, we are limited. We know many things, indeed, but there are many more things that we do not know. Hence our minds are circumscribed on all sides by impassable walls of ignorance. But it may be argued that the mind has an infinite potentiality for knowledge; its power for expansion is infinite. That may be, but we must hold that as it stands at present, it is finite. Suppose it knows all about this world of ours in one day, about our moon on the second day, about some one heavenly body on every succeeding day. Still, even after the lapse of a million years, its knowledge about the Universe must remain limited, since there will remain innumerable worlds still unknown, peopling the infinite bosom of space.

Now, a finite quantity, however big it may be, must be infinitesimally small when compared to infinity, as infinity must be infinite times bigger than that; and in higher mathematics, whatever is infinitesimally small is regarded as zero. So even with so much facility for knowledge, our information about the Universe will always remain insignificant, not worth mentioning. It is also a fact that a partial knowledge of a thing is worse than no knowledge of it since we are apt to mistake the part for the whole.

Once, four blind men wanted to have some idea of an elephant. So they requested the driver to allow them to touch the animal and thus form an idea of it. The driver was good enough to grant their request. The first man went and touched the huge belly of the animal and was satisfied with the thought that he

knew the elephant. The second man went and touched one of its legs and came away content with this knowledge. The third man went and touched one of its ears and believed he had a complete idea of the elephant. So also the fourth man went and touched its trunk and came away satisfied. Afterwards, with the knowledge thus gathered, they began to compare notes regarding the nature of the elephant. The first man said, "I have known the elephant, it is like a big basin of water." The second man exclaimed, "How can that be? I have also touched it; it is like a big pillar." To this the third man replied, "Both of you are mistaken. I have also touched it; it is like a big winnowing basket." The fourth man laughed to hear all these and said, "Friends, you astound me by your novel ideas about an animal which I also have had the privilege of touching and feeling. I have known it to be like a very thick club, almost tapering to a point downwards." Each one stuck to his own idea, and they would not be reconciled till the matter was brought and placed before the driver, who, on hearing the different versions, had a good laugh at them and at last said: "My friends, it is a pity that all of you have mistaken the part for the whole. Your idea about an elephant is, therefore, wholly wrong. It is better to confess one's own ignorance about it rather than to declare that it is like a pillar, a basin of water, a winnowing basket, or a very thick club." Thus saying, he gave them a description of it and all the four were ashamed of their stubbornness.

This story illustrates clearly the scientist's position regarding the knowledge of the Universe. His finite mind, in spite of potentiality, is quite inadequate

to grapple with infinity; hence his idea about the cosmos will always be insufficient and vague, and his incessant struggles to know it will always be fruitless. Such a thing is never desirable, and this is certainly not the method to acquire perfect knowledge of the Universe. So we must give up this scientific or objective method based upon sense perception, if we want to have a true and perfect knowledge of it.

Going back as far as any written testimony carries us into the beginningless past, we first come across the name of a perfected and all-knowing sage in the Svetasvatara Upanishad, one of the principal Vedantic texts. In describing the all-powerful and all-gracious nature of God, this Upanishad says: "He saw Kapila, the most ancient among the all-knowing sages (Rishis), and first of all infilled him with powers." Thus Kapila was the first Rishi or all knowing and perfected being. He was a man, for he was born like all ordinary mortals. How was it possible for him to become all-knowing? We have seen that it is not possible for any man to know all. Kapila, like others, found out that the objects which make up the Universe are innumerable; yet he was in a sense able to count them all. As he was able to number the innumerable, the system of philosophy he propounded goes by the name of Sankhya, which is derived from the word 'Sankhya' meaning a definite number. The Universe appears to be an aggregate of innumerable objects. But, he said, really there are only two objects. It is only when we look at the Universe through ignorance through a wrong method of perception, that it appears to be a collection of innumerable entities. Otherwise there are only two entities—Prakriti and Purusha, i.e.,

matter and spirit. These two are the uncreated, self-existent and primary beings. When they are combined together, the combinations and Prakriti number only twenty-four. The innumerable permutations and combinations of these first principles have brought this Universe into existence.

Chemical science has found out that there are at present seventy-seven elements, but it is not certain whether these will continue to be regarded as such. Most of them may be found to be compounds. Kapila's science is not empirical. It is perfectly certain and positive about the number of its first principles; so that it appears to a superficial enquirer to be dogmatic. He has given very clear and irrefutable proofs to establish the validity of his affirmation. He was the first to find out the phenomenal nature of the Universe and analysed it in this way. What is a phenomenon? It has got three factors—Adhyatma (spirit), Adhibhuta (matter), Adhidaiva (the illumining principle which unifies the former two). The Universe can only be perceived by the subject, the knower, *i.e.*, there must be a subject and an object to make a perception possible. Now in order to look at the Universe there must not only be the knower and the object, but also the illumining and unifying principle. If I wish to look at the picture in darkness, I cannot. There must be a light between me and the picture. I am the knower (Adhyatma), the picture is the object (Adhibhuta), and the light is the illumining principle (Adhidaiva). In the case of the eyes, the illumining principle is the light; of the tongue, water, of the nose, earthly particles; and so on. Thus the Universe can be known only by the help of the unifying principle standing between

it and myself. So there are three factors to make a phenomenon possible, Purusha and Prakriti, self and not-self, spirit and matter, and that which unites these two—in other words, the Adhyatma, Adhibhuta and Adhidaiva.

Further, I think of the Universe only by means of my mind. Now let us see where the Universe actually exists. It exists in me. This is exactly what Kapila first pointed out. The visible Universe exists in the seer; for the seer alone can see; the knower alone can know. He also answered the question whether it is desirable to have the Universe continue to exist for our enjoyment. It is an undeniable fact that we are so constituted that it does not seem possible for us to do away with it. We are born with the idea that it is a reality. We seem to depend upon it for our food and other wants, for our happiness, nay, for our very existence. But Kapila points out that these so-called natural cravings are the sources of our misery; they bring us innumerable births and deaths and accompanying troubles. So we must get rid of the very idea of the Universe. He has also shown the means of doing so. We have seen that according to him the Universe is not an infinite entity; he has numbered the factors composing it. Therefore it can be got rid of. It is a compound and not an element. Separate the components, and it dissolves and disappears. Matter and spirit only remain. This is what is called the condition of salvation, Moksha. It is the contact with matter that makes you appear to yourself as finite, although you are infinite. This is not desirable. Who would wish to lose his infinite power? If there is a chance of my becoming the lord of the Universe,

should I not claim it? How many are the candidates for acquiring limited powers! Much more should every one be a candidate for infinite power. You cannot know that you are limitless unless you separate your connection with the limited. Matter is limited, and so also must be every material body. Matter is defined to be that which is limited, and spirit to be that which is limitless. So if you wish to know that you are infinite (Vibhu) have no connection with matter. Do not think that your three and a half cubits of height constitutes your whole being.

This is Kapila's great philosophy. He was the first to point out that the mind is not spirit or Self. Western philosophies identify the mind with the soul, and seat it in the brain. Kapila pointed out that it is as much material as the living organism. Mind is that which thinks, feels and wills. This is the Western definition of it. But there can be no thought, feeling, or will without a corresponding object; you know that there can be no transitive verb without an object, and the three above-mentioned verbs are transitive. Thus the mind can never exist without an object, i.e., without matter; hence it is material. It has consciousness, because it is permeated by the Self. We all know that there are two sorts of matter, the unconscious or dead, and the conscious or living. Dull, dead matter is naturally unconscious. But this living organism of ours is conscious, and yet we do not call it spirit. Similarly though the mind has consciousness, we call it material because it is inseparably connected with matter. Hindu philosophers, without one exception, look at the mind just as they look at this living body, and regard it as one of the several organs through which the Purusha

or the Self comes in contact with the world. Hence it is called the sixth sense organ. We have five kinds of sensations through the five senses. These sensations are named in the Sankhya system as Tanmatras. Mind, as the sixth sense, enables us to think, feel and will. The illumining or unifying principle of each sense must stand between the Self and the Universe to make its conception possible.

Now the Universe is generally believed to be in space and time. Time is made up of past, present and future. The five senses are able to perceive the present Universe. The Universe of the past and the future is conceived by the mind. Thus the senses and the mind are the six intervening agencies through which alone the soul is able to unite itself with Prakriti or matter. What are the results of this union? Knowledge, perceptions and sensations. And these are called phenomena. The Universe is nothing but a collection of countless phenomena. Therefore it is not a simple and self-existent entity. It is a compound. The moment it is split up into its factors it vanishes. It only rests between spirit and matter. But matter does not even know its own existence, while spirit knows not only its own existence, but also that of matter. Hence the conceptions of both matter and spirit, as well as of their countless unions, the phenomena, or the Universe,—all exist in the spirit or the self.

Kapila's philosophy enables you to understand clearly how the Universe has come into existence. The primary categories, Purusha and Prakriti, or spirit and matter, are in themselves inactive. Spirit is inactive because it is infinite. That which is finite can have motion from one place to another but the

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infinite has no outside, and hence where can it go? There is another reason for its inactivity or peaceful calmness. Being perfection itself, and thus having no want, it needs no activity. It is the feeling of want that actuates a man to work for its removal. Purusha is wantless, and hence he is quiet. Prakriti or matter also is inactive; being inert and unconscious, it has no power to go from one place to another. Out of these two inactive entities, how has this incessant activity, this Universe, come into existence? The Universe is all motion. How can it spring from two motionless causes? How can it ever come into existence? In answer to this question Kapila gives a very fine and apt illustration. The lame man cannot walk, the blind man cannot see; but if the lame man gets on the shoulders of the blind man, both can go wherever they like. Similarly, spirit, united with matter, produces all these countless activities that go by the name of the Universe.

Spirit again is infinite. Now suppose a rich man has been imprisoned and forced to live on thin gruel alone. Would he not rebel against such a sort of life and struggle hard to free himself from it? Even so is the case with every one of us. We are all infinite, but by some irresistible power we have been imprisoned in this material and mortal body. Hence life has become a constant struggle throughout, a struggle to throw away this unbearable limitation or bondage. Every one aims at a higher or more expanded form of life. For instance, the poor man wants to become rich, the rich richer. Infinite power is potentially existing in us. Some unaccountable, irresistible and foreign power has deprived us of our glory and im-
 pri-

soned us in this filthy dungeon of a body. So we naturally resent this and strive to break through this finite shell. This is life.

The Universe is full of activities, creative, preservative and destructive. Kapila has thus explained how two inactive principles produce activity. But who brought them together? In answer Kapila says, "None". The combination or union is from time without beginning. Thus he finds no necessity to believe in the existence of an eternal God, because none is required to bring about the union which is beginningless; and the moment we can disunite ourselves from matter, we become free, no Divine help being needed. He has written a few aphorisms to show the non-existence of God. He says in one of them, "The existence of God cannot be proved." He brings the reason in the next aphorism, which says, "For God cannot be either free or not free". A free, perfect and infinite God would have no desire to create, preserve and destroy. If he is not free, He is imperfect and finite, and can have no power to create. Thus there cannot be an external God.

This is putting one on the horns of a dilemma. When we attribute to God the power of bringing together and harmonising all contradictions in Himself as when we say that He is finite and infinite, active and inactive simultaneously, this argument falls to the ground. Moreover, Kapila says that the union of Purusha and Prakriti is beginningless. Now, can we imagine knowledge without a knower, activity without an actor, and unity without a unifier? Never. Hence matter and spirit cannot come together without a unifier. If this union is beginningless and infinite

so also must be the unifier which is another name for God. Through His infinite and inconceivable power which goes by the name of Maya, He brings about this union. "I make the souls forget their true nature by means of My divine Maya. Maya limits even the limitless. None can go beyond it. Only those who surrender themselves to My mercy can cross over it" (*Gita*).

Thus even from Kapila's philosophy we may arrive at an eternal God. He also holds that without a creator, a preserver and a destroyer, creation, preservation and destruction are not possible. So for each cycle there should be a Brahma, a Vishnu and a Siva. But his system upholds the plurality of souls, and so he does not believe in one permanent Brahma, Vishnu, or Siva. According to him, these are posts that are filled by a fresh set of qualified souls in each cycle. He does not believe in the permanency of the person although he holds the post to be permanent. But as there cannot be more than one infinity, there cannot be more than one Purusha. Hence God must be absolutely one and eternal, of whom Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are different manifestations; so we cannot separate creation, preservation and dissolution. Whatever is created must continue to exist for some time, and then disappear or dissolve. Thus from Kapila we learn that the Universe of phenomena is actually existing in the Self or the knower. It cannot exist in the unconscious Prakriti or matter; which does not know its own existence; whereas a phenomenon must be known in order to be a phenomenon.

We also arrive at the same conclusion even if we study the problem from the modern scientific stand-

point. Where does the Universe exist? It is localised in space and time. Are they self-existent, or themselves localised somewhere? It is an undeniable fact that they exist only in your waking condition, and not when you sleep soundly. When a man like Rip Van Winkle in the story sleeps even for several months, he does not know where he has been lying or how long. So space and time exist in your waking condition, *i.e.*, they exist when you are conscious, or in other words in your consciousness. Now your consciousness is confined inside your body; for outside it, in the table or the chair, it does not exist. Hence the Universe is inside your body, which is pervaded by your mind, which in its turn is pervaded by the Self. So the whole cosmos is in yourself. Immanuel Kant has also pointed out that space and time are the two forms of the senses and the mind; they do not exist apart from them.

There is another way of arriving at the same conclusion. Suppose a big cannon is fired two miles away from you, there being nothing intervening between it and yourself. You see the flash, and you know that almost simultaneously with the flash, the roaring sound is there. But you do not hear it. There is no sound for you. You hear it a few seconds after the actual occurrence. Now where does the sound take place? In the cannon, or in the ears? The auditory nerves within the ears carry the vibration to the brain centre, which carries it to the mind, and that to yourself; and then you hear it. So the sound exists inside yourself, and not in the cannon outside. Similarly forms, touches, tastes, and smells exist inside your senses or in yourself. And so the Universe, which is

but an aggregate of innumerable sensations of forms, tastes and smells, exists inside your body, in your mind, or in your own consciousness, not outside. There is no such thing as space or time outside you.

Yet another method of arriving at this conclusion is this. You know that every object of inference really exists in the mind. There are two ways of looking at the Universe—Pratyaksha and Anumana or direct perception and inference. You see the smoke on yonder hill; you see the smoke alone directly, and you infer that there must be fire along with it. This knowledge of the fire is not based upon your direct perception through your eyes. The fire exists only in your mind. So is every matter of inference. How far does our direct perception extend? We see the beautiful birds winging their way through the air in all directions; we see the sun during the day, and the shining starry world in the nights. Even beyond these there must be space; that is what we infer. The space beyond is conceived as made up of various concentric spheres, one surrounding the other which go by the names of Janah, Mahah, Tapah and Satyam. Of these we are able to see directly only this side of Swarga or heaven, while the other side and the other outer spheres are invisible to us; we simply infer their existence. Now whatever is inferred, is in the mind. So all the outer spheres are in the mind. But all the inner spheres, which make up the visible Universe are inside the outer. So the visible Universe must be inside the mind or in yourself.

Again, who illumines all these? The sun. What illumines the sun? The eyes; for an eyeless man has no sun. What illumines the eyes? The mind. What

illuminates the mind? The Self. So the whole Universe is illumined by yourself. But for you, there can be no Universe. Thus you see that you cannot localise it outside yourselves; the whole of it exists in your own minds, in your own selves. But at present our condition is such that we are forced to regard it as outside ourselves. After what we have already known, there is a possibility of our knowing all about the Universe since it exists in our consciousness. Yasoda, the cowherd queen, chid her baby Sri Krishna, for having eaten clay. He denied it. She asked him to open his mouth, and when he opened it, she beheld the whole Universe there. A man, like Sri Krishna, has the whole Universe in himself. Thus he is naturally all-knowing. And as knowledge is power, he is also all-powerful.

But let us now turn our attention to the ordinary man. What is his idea about himself and the world around him? Instead of regarding the world as subsisting in himself, he believes himself to be in it as one of its denizens, and he is disposed to laugh at a man who says that the Universe is in him. This is no wonder. So long as he identifies himself with his body, he cannot help thinking that he begins to exist with his birth and ceases to exist with his death. That is why he fears so much to die. He does not know that his body, and not he, has birth and death, while he is really birthless and deathless. Such a one goes by the name of Jiva or mortal creature. Whether he knows it or not, his universe is in him, and it begins and ends with him. This is called Jiva-srishti or the ephemeral creation of a mortal being.

There is, however, also the eternal and infinite creation, about which we learn from ancient history, geology, astronomy and all other sciences. Where does this Universe exist? My little universe exists in my own little mind, Self. It cannot exist without a mind or knower, as the existence of a phenomenon is only possible in consciousness. This we have already seen. Now the eternal creation is an unbroken series of countless phenomena running on throughout all time, and so it must be in an eternal and infinite mind or Self, which is God. Hence this creation goes by the name of Isha-srishti or God's creation. When the finite man of three and a half cubits in length will gradually get rid of this wrong notion about himself with the increasing light of wisdom, when, disentangling himself from the meshes of his little body and mind, he will merge his pure Self in the infinite Self of God,—then alone will the truth shine upon him, the idea of limitation and fear of death cease to trouble him, and he will lose himself in the ocean of eternal peace and bliss by realising his perfect and infinite Self.

May God dispel our ignorance and enable us to know who we are!

III

SPACE AND TIME

LET us imagine a certain place beyond the celestial sphere which contains all the heavenly bodies, beyond the limits of what we understand by the term Universe and let us suppose that the Lord of the Universe appears there as he appeared to Moses on Horeb, the mountain of the Lord. Let us suppose Him to will the entire sphere, in whose immense capacity all the innumerable stellar and solar systems are contained, to be reduced to the size of a pea, without any disturbance of the relative positions of all the heavenly bodies as well as of all the things that are in them—allowing all His creatures to be where they are, only diminished in size in regular proportion to the vast diminution of the whole, without the least motion and knowledge on the part of the living and sentient denizens of the Universe. And let this even take place within the twinkling of an eye, since nothing is impossible to Him who has created the entire cosmos out of His own will.

Then let us see what will happen with us here on earth. Of course, our mental phenomena of ideas will not suffer at all by this vast diminution, since they are without extension either to be increased or diminished. Now as to our physical bodies and the object of our perception, so long as the relative posi-

tion of all the parts of our bodies, and likewise of all the things under the cognition of our senses, remains the same, it is plain that no change will be recognised by us. This will become clear by the following illustrations:

Suppose a man looks through the wrong end of an opera-glass at the men and women passing along the street opposite to his room. How very much smaller they will appear! Then let him shut the doors and windows of his room to make it dark, and after this let him look again for some minutes through the same wrong end towards the men and women of the busy street full of traffic. After a few minutes, the darkness of the room having barred his sight from his surroundings and thereby having prevented him from comparing the smaller things in the street with the actual things round him, and his memory of these things having also failed a little by that time,—the people in the street will no longer appear to him to be so much smaller; and if this operation be continued a little longer, they will almost appear to be natural men and women.

Or I shall imagine him to be enamoured of a fine picture drawn by a master hand. The mountain, the running stream, the trees, the men and women at play, the cattle grazing by the side of the brook in the picture,—all will appear to him to be real and living. He forgets for the moment that all those things are depicted upon a few square inches of canvas. Why is this? Because the relative proportions of the mountain, the stream, the trees, the men and women, the cattle and all other things of the real

world have been preserved in the picture by the expert painter.

The optical illusion regarding extension, although experienced by everyone, is yet greatly overlooked. When an object gradually wanes in size as the distance between it and the observer is increased, or when we see it magnified or diminished according as we see it through the right or the wrong end of a telescope—the infinite variety of forms which the same object then assumes, proves that there is no definite and permanent form of extension. In the state of dream, when all our external organs are inactive, the mind creates a world for itself. We then see, feel, touch, move and do all sorts of things as in waking state, although our bodies do not move at all. In this case the space is purely a mental creation.

To return to our hypothesis. Although, like our own bodies, everything about us—above, below and around—has been immensely diminished by the supposed fiat of God, we cannot still help thinking that we are the same as before. Now let us ponder over this change. Astronomers tell us that there is a countless number of stars so distant that their rays have not yet reached us here on earth since their creation. This immense distance is almost incomprehensible. All such stars are contained in what we described as the celestial sphere. Therefore the vastness of this imaginary sphere is much more incomprehensible. Now to think of so vast a thing as reduced to the form of so small an object as a pea, without the knowledge on our part of this great change, is no doubt very incredible, although it is the case if the conditions stated are fulfilled.

Then what is space? Has it any real and absolute or independent existence? We have seen that it has only a relative existence and this relativity of its existence is altogether deceiving. Duality is the beginning of relativity. The moment two things or two ideas start up, relativity begins. Then we commence to differentiate one thing or idea from the other. Here is the beginning of knowledge and elementary reasoning. From this we proceed to more complex reasoning on coming across a variety of things or ideas till for the sake of convenience we name them differently by looking at their differences; and we retain these various ideas and names in our mind by the relative faculty called memory, the storehouse of our knowledge. So we see that relativity is the cause of our knowledge, and that space is nothing but an idea of relation.

Let us consider the matter from another point of view. Let us go beyond relativity by considering unity. Let us imagine that all the infinite number of colours are blended into one single colour, white or red or anything else. Then because there is only one colour, we cannot give it any particular name to distinguish it from any other colour; for by hypothesis there is only one colour. Let us suppose a person observing under these conditions. He will see nothing, neither his physical body, nor the world external; for if he sees anything in the world, he must realise a variety of colour which, by assumption, there is not. It will be very much the same when in an inactive state of the mind we shut our eyes; then no idea of space is at all present in our mind. But we may imagine the observer to grope his way. His muscular

energy produces locomotion, and the length or shortness of duration of this muscular exercise can still give him an idea of space. Let us suppose him to be devoid of the power of locomotion. From his sense of touch he may yet have an idea of extension, for he can feel two or more distinct sensations in the different parts of his body. Now take from him the sense of touch. Then his two ears can furnish him with the idea, the waning and waxing of sound producing the conception of farness and nearness. But if we suppose him to be deaf also, his tongue can be of use to him; for if a little sugar is placed near the root of his tongue, while a particle of quinine is applied to its tip, two different sensations will be felt in two different places, thus giving rise to the idea of extension. Now let us consider whether the observer's nose has anything to do with this idea. Yes, it has; for two different sensations of smell from two different directions may be experienced by holding before his nostrils two different flowers, one before each nostril. Thus we have seen that every one of our five senses, our muscular sense and our idea of time, have all to contribute to the idea of space, and that this idea is altogether relative.

Let us lastly suppose the observer to be deprived of the power of smelling. What remains to make him conscious of extension? Nothing. In this state he can only be conscious of ideas stored up in his mind by memory, [their succession producing the idea of time. Let him then rise above his memory; for it is in the power of every man to call up an idea in his memory or not, since it entirely depends upon his own choice. So let us suppose him not to be ruffled by any idea.

called up by his memory. He is then no more a sentient being driven hither and thither by the storm of sensations, perceptions and ideas in the illimitable ocean of space and time. He is now above them, being consciousness itself enjoying beatific quietude—a purely absolute existence beyond relativity. Indian Yogis call this state Sachchidananda Brahman, that is, pure existence, pure consciousness and beatific calm. Here is the end of all struggles.

Now let us consider the difficulties of attaining such a state. When a Yogi tries to concentrate his mind, he sits in a cross-legged posture, with his body erect, upon a level spot neither too high nor too low, shuts his eyes and tries to separate his mind from all his senses. So far it is easy. For a time he can baffle the delusion of space. But he finds a great deal of difficulty to struggle with time; for a long succession of random mental phenomena intrudes on his mental filed. The cause of this disturbance is the ever active habit of his mind acquired by long association with the senses. Even after the carriage has been cut away from the running train, it moves a good distance by its own inertia. It requires an opposing force to check its course, and it cannot be stopped all at once; if we attempt to do it, there will be great shock, which may damage the carriage. The best way, therefore, is to allow it to move along, only trying at the same time to retard its motion gently as much as we can. So also in this case. Allow the mind to oscillate between one idea and another for a time, then try to retard the oscillation by compelling it to oscillate in relation to one and the same idea. This can be done by the mental repetition of a single word, called Mantra in Sanskrit,

and the best Mantra in this case of mental concentration is the Pranava (Om) of the Vedas. The meaning of the Pranava is Sachchidananda Brahman, where all struggles end; and hence the repetition of that Mantra inclines the mind to, and prepares it for that blessed state. Any other Mantra than the Pranava does not serve the purpose so well; for they require the help either of the throat, palate, teeth or lips for their articulation; whereas the Pranava requires the least physical exertion for its utterance and therefore is more suited for mental repetition. Hence it has been pronounced to be the best of all the Mantras; and because it helps the attainment of eternal peace in Brahman, it has been highly extolled in the Vedas.

Now, when after several mental repetitions of the Pranava the oscillation of the mind becomes less and less, there will be greater and greater tranquillity within till at length, if the process is steadily pursued, it reaches the blessed state. This cannot be done in a day. It requires a hard struggle of many days to end all struggles. You should repeat the process daily to cultivate the habit of calmness against your acquired habit of random activity. In doing so, you will find many difficulties; such as carnal appetite, desire for fame, the fear of being useless to society,—all of which will try to deter you from your pursuit after truth and detain you in the mirage of space and time. Greed and lust are the two principal attractions in this world of ours, and they will not easily allow you to tear off the bond of your lifelong slavery to them. "He alone can hope to attain the blessed state who can look down upon wealth, and see in every woman the blessed image of his own mother," says Bhagavan

Sri Ramakrishna. With a holy and meek heart devoid of all desires after carnal enjoyments, a man may aspire to break down the barrier which hides from his view the eternal mansion of Truth. There is no other way left for him. The balloon tries to ascend the sky but finds the ropes that bind it to the earth too strong to rend asunder with its limited power. Untie the ropes and the balloon will merrily rise above the world. Such is the way to perfection in Yoga.

IV

THE SELF-IMPOSED STRUGGLE

IN the state of reverie or dream, when we are the creators of our own world, we can imagine or dream of extended bodies and surfaces, such as the sun, the moon, the mountain, the river, the sky, the ocean and so on. But we can imagine only what we have perceived before, and although we may combine anew the elements of the things previously perceived, we cannot create anything which we have not experienced in some shape or other beforehand. This shows that our mind has of itself a faculty of conceiving space, although the conception has been derived from something independent of our mind, namely, the objects of our perception. These objects are the cause of rousing the slumbering faculty of spatial conception inherent in our mind. In the case of reverie or dream, space is purely a mental form, and hence must be without any extension. Now let us consider it as perceived in our waking state. I have just tried to prove the relative nature of space, and the non-existence of any permanent and definite form of extension. Just as space, in our reverie or dream, is purely of a mental nature and has its place only in our mind, similarly may it not be concluded that the infinite space outside and independent of us has its place in the infinite and independent mind of a Being whom we call God? "We are such:

stuff as dreams are made of." This conclusion is the only one which can reconcile the universally accepted belief that in the beginning there was only one omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, pure, independent, absolute Being, named God. Creation is the manifestation of His eternal will. It proceeds from His will. From Him proceed creation, preservation and destruction. Man is created in His image; and therefore, as he is merely the image of the real, and is wholly dependent on Him, he possesses only very little power, either physical or mental, and even that not for long. He is able to build houses, erect towers and monuments, span rivers by bridges, dig long-winding ditches, remove mountains, defy space and time by means of electricity, and create worlds for himself by means of his fertile imagination so as to forget the real by his ideal creation. He is able to do all these things with that very little power which has been allotted to him. Nay, he can do more. If these things do not please him; if the world with its infinite charms cannot find any attraction for him; if the loving look of his wife, the sweet smile of his children, the pleasure and the power of luxury and of wealth, the allurements of name and fame and the many other things which this world affords, lose all their savour for him,—then he can easily dispense with all these things, start for his true home and find eternal bliss in going up to Him from whom he came.

When the external world loses all its charms for a man, his mind naturally turns to itself. From that time the man is really entitled to study and think of philosophy; for then he will naturally devote himself entirely to unravel the mystery of his own

existence, as there is nothing else to draw him away from such a pursuit. In this process of philosophical self-examination, he at once perceives that his physical and mental states have been changing from moment to moment in the course of his life, and that nevertheless he has been feeling himself to be the same man unaffected by the variations in his mental and moral conditions. In doing so, he marks his own plastic nature. When his body was that of a child, he thought himself to be a child; when his body was weak, he thought himself weak; when his body was strong, he thought himself strong; when his body was that of a youth, he felt himself to be young, and so on. But all these different circumstances have not in the least affected his self-identity. He feels himself to be merely a spectator of the long-winding panorama of the outer life. He finds that what may be called his self, has the peculiar power of adapting itself to the conditions of the body. In a weak body it is weak, in a strong one it is strong, in a feverish one it is feverish, in a dyspeptic one it is dyspeptic, and so on. But of itself it is neither weak nor strong, neither feverish nor dyspeptic; it is pure identity, the witness of all these and other states. He also finds that this self is neither a male nor a female, neither a Brahman nor a Sudra, neither a Hindu nor a Mussalman, neither a Christian nor a Buddhist, and that it is neither of this nor of that class or nation or sect, because all these distinctions savour of externality, and so belong to the external world. But this self is something internal which is unchangeable. He finds too that although his childhood, youth and manhood are no more, his self survives them all; so he finds his self to

be the one unchanging entity in a changeful world, without any name or form, caste or creed, without fear or hope, pleasure or pain, free from all physical bondages. When it comes in contact with bodily frames, it acquires all the aforesaid and many other attributes although essentially and by nature it has none, as a pure crystal, without any colour of its own, takes on the colours of the things that come in contact with it. Ultimately he finds the self to be beyond the domain of space and time, absolute and so indivisible,¹ full in itself and of the nature of pure Consciousness. Then he concludes that since this is true of his self, it must also be true of the selves of all other individuals like himself; for, says Sri Ramakrishna, "No one examines all the grains of rice that boil in a pot to see whether they are well cooked or not; the examination of a single grain is sufficient guarantee for all the others." Therefore he finds that his self is the Self universal, one and absolute. The selves of the highest and the lowest beings are one and the same essentially.

Now it may be asked : If in reality there is only one Soul in all, whence comes this diversity of souls in different individuals ? We are born with the idea that every man has an independent soul. Yes, so it is ; but that does not prove that there is any essential diversity of souls in individuals. It is indeed true that there are innumerable numbers of images of the sun reflected in ponds, lakes, rivers, seas and waves ; but that does not prove that there are many suns. The

1. For if he thinks of dividing the Absolute, then it is no more Absolute but relative, and also he cannot even imagine dividing what is beyond space and time. So he realises his Self to be Akhanda, that is, without any part, undivided.

sun is one, only it appears to be many when reflected in water or glass. Such is the case here. The Universal Soul is reflected in every individual, and from this springs the diversity. When a man comes to know this true Self, of which he is an image, and becomes one with It, he finds himself reflected in all.

When he reaches that supreme state and gains a permanency there, he is one with the eternal omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Mind—the Universal Soul; that is, he finds himself to be the Brahman. He is then above all troubles and turmoils of the world; free from all its cares and anxieties, seeing himself in all, and all in himself, and feeling himself, and to be the one Soul of the entire creation. Now he exclaims with the great Maharshi Ashtavakra, “The Universe has emanated from me, it is destined to end in me, as an earthen vessel loses itself in earth at last, as the waves die in water, as a golden ornament, losing its form, becomes gold in the end. O joy! I bow down to my eternal Self, which has no end even when all beings, from the highest to the lowest, with the entire Universe, die. O joy! I bow down to myself, as I am alone without a second, and even though I have a body, I neither come nor go; for I cover the whole Universe. O joy! I bow down to myself; for there is none abler and cleverer than myself, as the Universe is held in my body, without even touching it. O joy! I bow down to myself who has nothing, or has all, that can be comprehended by thought and language.”

Now if such is the case with every man's true Self, then the question naturally arises: What induces the Absolute One to forsake eternal bliss and court

the infinite troubles and tortures of an ever-fluctuating world? What great attraction is there for Him to forsake the state of sweet quietude to be drifted hither and thither amidst the lashing waves of the innumerable turns of fortune and of events? What power is there that can obscure the omniscience and limit the omnipotence of the Universal Mind? All do not give the same answer to this question. Some say that Avidya or Nescience has power to blind the eye of omniscience and curtail the power of omnipotence. She¹ is an independent power co-eval with creation, and its sole mistress; for all activities, both mental and physical, proceed from Her.

Now let us see whether She is independent of, or subservient to, the Brahman. Since the self of man, however blinded it may be by the nameless power of Nescience, retains its original character in some degree, it will not be amiss, if we judge of the highest Self or Brahman by studying the characteristics of the lower self or humanity. It has been asserted that this Nescience is the only cause of bringing woe to the human self, otherwise free and absolute. But it is also true at the same time that She is the cause of all the pleasures and enjoyments, both physical and mental that a man enjoys here. All the different shades of feelings, pleasurable or painful, all sorts of desires, and all kinds of intellectual activity proceed from Her; for Brahman or Pure Self cannot be all these or any of these. It is pure consciousness, pure existence and beatitude itself, without the least trace of activity, beyond space and time, and so indivisible and

1 What is philosophically described as Avidya or Nescience is the great Goddess or Divine Mother in a religious sense.

absolute. Nescience begins with duality and reigns in diversity. She is the mother of Brahma,¹ Vishnu, and Maheswara, the authors of creation, preservation and destruction. She is the source of both good and evil, law and lawlessness, kindnesses and cruelty, sympathy and antipathy, pleasure and pain, heat and cold, activity and inactivity, motion and rest. Hence She is known as the personification of all force, and is called Shakti. She is also called Maya, that is mistake or illusion, because She blinds the eye of Self-knowledge.

Now Brahman, being self-illuminated, omniscient, pure and spotless, cannot be supposed to be in any way contaminated by this Maya ; and so It is likened to a drop of water upon a lotus leaf, which, although in direct contact with the leaf, does not adhere to it. When a man realises the absolute independence of his self-illuminated Self, then, and not till then, this Nescience loses mastery over him.

Now let us see whether or not this kind of conditioning of the Absolute Self or Brahman is brought about by Nescience against what may be called the will of the Absolute One. In the Upanishads we find that the Absolute Being willed and became an active agent in the act of creation. In the Aitareya Upanishad we find the following passage in the very beginning :

“ In the beginning, the Self, the one alone, was all this (Universe). There was nothing else besides. He, the all-knowing, looked around and thought within

1 Brahma (mas.) of the Hindu Trinity is the Demiurge, the world creator, He is not to be confused with Brahman (neut.), the Absolute, of Hindu philosophy.

Himself, 'I will create the worlds', and created these worlds." This plainly shows that the Absolute One willingly courted Nescience, and that this Nescience was within Him in a latent state, and that it depends upon the will of the Brahman to put Her down or bring Her out. In the Puranas we find that this Nescience is represented as the loving consort of the creative Brahman or Purusha ; and She is the principal instrument in the act of creation. There the Brahman is no longer neuter but assumes male form, and is called Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, while Nescience—Maya—becomes the female partner of these three and is called Sarasvati, Lakshmi and Uma respectively. Even in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1. 4. 3) we find the passage : "He divided Himself into two parts and they became husband and wife." So we see it stated that the Purusha obviously finds a certain sort of pleasure in conditioning Himself by courting Nescience or Prakriti, as a man, otherwise free, finds pleasure in conditioning himself by marriage. But still the question arises : Who will forsake omniscience to court ignorance, who will willingly deprive himself of the highest state of bliss to be drifted in the stormy sea of variegated circumstances? The All-knowing sometimes plays with Ignorance (Maya) and sometimes likes to remain calm and peaceful as Vyasa and others have found (Brahma Sutras, II. 1. 33).

If we are really the absolute and eternal God, why are we not able to shake off at once the unbearable troubles and tortures of life, break down the barrier of Nescience, and realise our own true blissful nature ? To answer this, I have simply to remind you.

that, however miserable we may be, few of us are willing to forsake this life and part for ever from those who are near and dear to us. This tenacious clinging to life is illustrated by the following story :

Once upon a time there lived a confectioner in a certain village of Northern India. He had his home in the outskirts of the village, and next to it was his shop of sweetmeats—the best of all the shops in the village. It was the principal source of his income, some of which, after defraying the expenses of his family consisting of his wife and two little children, he laid by, day by day, without the least knowledge of any one.

One day, as he was sitting in his shop a little before noon, a good-looking Sannyasin dressed in a tattered cloak came in to find shelter for a while from the scorching sun. After taking a little rest, he wanted to drink some water, and the confectioner offered him a cup of cool water, together with some sweets. The Sannyasin, after being refreshed, again asked of him to mend his clothing, saying he could not sleep in the night because of the sting of mosquitoes that found entrance through the many holes of his garment. This also the confectioner did; for he was a very good man. After three hours' labour he was able to give a definite shape to the garment, which was in a pitiable shapeless condition before. That night the Sannyasin slept very soundly.

Next morning, when the confectioner was in his shop, the Sannyasin appeared before him, now not to ask anything of him, but to requite him for the good he had done him the previous day. He could not do

this in the shape of money, of course, for he had altogether forsaken both 'wealth and woman', but he offered him something higher than the world, as he had a great power in him, having realised his oneness with the Higher Self or Brahman. Such holy men, although they have no attractions in the world and do not like to play a part here any longer, still stay here to guide and help other men. Now he saw that the confectioner had a great desire to enjoy the things of the world, and so would not forsake the pleasures of life to realise the Higher Self. He wanted him therefore to go to Goloka where he would find enjoyments in abundance. But the confectioner mused for a while and then implored the anchorite thus :

"O master, who will not go to that blessed land ? Men give up all wealth and honour, and lead a strictly ascetic life in the forests for years and years with the hope of going to that abode after their departure from this world. O large hearted saint, your munificence is without any parallel. But as you know all, you have of course seen these two little boys who have no friend here in this world save me. It will make them altogether miserable if I leave them thus helpless. If you will kindly wait a few years, say eight, till they can earn at least a pittance for themselves, you will do me the highest favour."

The Sannyasin heard this, and finding his attraction towards his children to be more than that towards God and heaven, took compassion upon him, and agreed to come to him after eight years.

On the appointed day the anchorite came again, but the confectioner pleaded most piteously, "Revered sir, what an unbearable load of misfortune the Lord

of the Universe has hoarded for me. Look at my two boys. How wicked they have become! They have spent through liquor and bad company nearly all that I had laid by. Now I am bent upon getting them married, and this may abate their thriftlessness by tying them to the family. As I require money for this purpose, I request your holiness to wait for another eight years."

The good Sannyasin heard all this silently. He knew that the confectioner's love for his family was greater than his love for anything else, and felt much pity for him. He departed, again promising to return on the same day after another eight years.

The years fled away, and on the appointed day the Sadhu reappeared to see in the place of the good confectioner's shop a wretched ill-thatched grocery, where the eldest son of the man was selling things of small value to the poorer class of the village. He approached him and inquired about the father.

"Alas! revered sir," replied the son, "he is dead these seven years, leaving us in a sea of troubles. We are altogether impoverished. We have no more that fine shop. I keep this poor grocery, and you can see my younger brother there in the field at work with the plough."

The hermit heard all this silently. Then, as he could know all things if he willed, he understood that the father had again been born as one of the bullocks which were ploughing the field, guided by the younger son. He, therefore, waited till the husbandman unyoked the bullocks at noon. He then seized the opportunity, when no one was near, to enter into the bullock-shed, and taking a little holy water out of his

begging bowl, sprinkled it over the head of the ox, to remind him of his former birth, as well as of the contract between them. At this the ox bowed his head and began to complain: "Yes, sir, this is the appointed day. Since nothing is hidden from your view, you can easily see the marks of poverty all round. All—all has been spent by those two fools, my luckless sons. A year or two more, and they are sure to be starved to death. Sir, won't you allow me, at this juncture, to plough for them a few years to see if they can improve their condition once more?"

The hermit heard this in silence. He found that no amount of lecturing could make him give up his clinging to life. Full of pity for him, he again agreed to appear after some years. After the lapse of the period, he returned, and began to search for the shop, but could not find it. He then proceeded to the house of the old confectioner, but at the door he was attacked by a lean and hungry cur. He began to call aloud to the inmates of the house, and when the eldest son appeared, inquired about the welfare of his family, and at last, about the bullock too. The man answered. "Ah! sir, the poor creature died a year ago. What a fine animal he was! He ate but little and laboured from morning till night. Another ox of that kind is hard to get." Hearing this, the hermit, by his all-knowing power, came to know that the cur was no other than the old confectioner himself, and was, therefore, so assiduous in guarding the remaining small property that he furiously barked at any stranger lest he should take even a straw from the dear home. So he waited for an opportunity to remind him of his former self and the contract between them.

Then the dog bowed down his head and began to weep at his feet for his great misfortune and concluded by saying: "Revered sir, allow me even a few years more to see my unfortunate sons rally and guard the remnant of my property from the clutches of the thieves that infest this neighbourhood. I laboured much in my days to collect the little I have, and now I cannot leave it to be a prey to thieves." The hermit heard his words in silence, but finding it useless to argue with him, again promised to return after some years.

The term elapsed. He again appeared there, and found, in the place of the confectioner's home, two huts lately erected. On inquiring, he learned that the two brothers had taken to litigation against each other, and had been almost reduced to poverty. Slowly he proceeded to one of the huts where the sons now lived. But he did not find the dog there. Then he came to know by his all-knowing power that the confectioner had become a serpent and was living in a subterranean cave just below the site of his former room, coiling himself round a brazen jug which contained all the money he had secreted there. At this time the two brothers came out of one of the huts, quarrelling. When they saw the Sannyasin, one of them exclaimed: "Lo! brother, all our misfortunes have been brought about by this ill-omened vagabond; for ever since he has been visiting us; we have been becoming poorer and poorer." And turning to the Sannyasin, he exclaimed "Now get away, you infernal messenger of misfortune, or it will be a very bad day for you." On hearing this, the Sannyasin said, quite calm and unruffled, "Dear friends, have you become so poor ?

Do you want money ? Then go and dig out the site of the room where your parents used to sleep formerly, and whatever money you will find there, divide equally among yourselves."

On hearing this, the two brothers were exceedingly happy and began to dig with all their might. When they approached the jug, the viper darted against them. They now thought that the Sadhu was a veritable rogue who wanted to see them die of snake-bite, and accordingly then resolved to belabour him right and left. Knowing their purpose, the hermit said to them, "Do you think that I am a liar ? Don't you see the rim of the brazen jug there ? It contains all the money you want. Kill the serpent and it is yours." On hearing this, they inspected the hole from a distance and saw the rusty rim of a jug therein. So desisting from their fell purpose, they directed all their anger against the snake and killed it at once. The spirit of the confectioner, thus finally set free from the last remnant of his earthly property, was in course of time raised to Goloka by the Sannyasin's spiritual power.

Such is the tenacity with which we cling to the world and life in it. This clinging is of a man's own choosing. Even death cannot wrench him from it; on the contrary death only strengthens his attachment to life and the world by giving him a new and vigorous body. Death is only changing a worn-out body for a fresh one. Even when a man is disgusted with the world through misery, and feels a strong inclination to give it up at once, and for ever, it is often the feeling of utter helplessness and inability to mend his fortune that prompts him, rather than any conviction

of his inherent Divinity. There may be no clinging for the time being. But if he can mend his fortune, will he not be glad to stay on here and enjoy all the bliss that this life can give? Even when he wants to die, his desire to play with Nescience and his clinging to life still lurk within him.

Few have the renunciation of a Nachiketas, whose story illustrates clearly what is meant by the complete cessation of all worldly desires. The story is known to every reader of the Upanishads.

The young Brahmin lad, Nachiketas, in his very early years had the power of communing with the gods, and made fair progress in the study of the Veda. From the Veda he had learned that whoever makes a charity of useless things that may only prove a burden to the recipient is destined to go to the abode of darkness after death. Therefore, when he saw his father giving away some old useless cows, he was seized with fear of his future state. His father indeed had nothing else to give; for he had already given away all his property to the other Brahmins. So the boy pondered within himself, "Since I am also the property of my father and am not a bad boy after all, why should he not rectify his conduct by giving me away to some one?" So thinking, he went to his father and made his thought known. At first the father took no notice of it, but the importunity of his son made him angry, and he said, "I wish to give you away to Death; go, bother me not." Although the father was not at all serious, the boy was, and he thought within himself, "Since I have been given away to Death, I should go to him." So by means of Yoga he betook himself to the abode of Death, but the latter was away.

THE SELF-IMPOSED STRUGGLE

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Nachiketas waited at his gate for three days and three nights, and on the fourth day, when Yama returned, he went to the boy at once and expressed his regret at having kept him waiting so long. "But," he said, "I shall make amends for this by giving you three boons for the three days." The boy got his two boons, and for the third he asked for the knowledge regarding the condition of the Self after it has left the body. Yama did not wish to grant him this; and begged him to choose something else. But he was inexorable. Yama offered him the longest term of life, vast wealth, big empire, fairy-like damsels, all property, all enjoyment. Still the boy was inexorable. He said, "The life which thou dost promise, however long, is nothing before eternity, and all sensual enjoyments weaken man. So let all the wealth, all the beauty, all the music and dancing be yours." When nothing could tempt him, Yama taught him all about the Self.

How many of us can stand even a hundredth part of the temptation by which Nachiketas was tried? As all attachments are self-created, it is the self alone that willingly bears all sorts of pains. Self alone has the power to give up all attachments and know its own true essence. "Self alone is the friend or enemy of self," says Bhagavan Sri Krishna. The absolute independence of the true Self can be realised by a man who is blinded by Nescience, only when he sits at the feet of an enlightened Guru whose self has subdued Nescience. Now, therefore, it is plain that all the struggles and troubles of this world, in which every human soul has a share, are of its own making—that the Maya-shakti, the power that deludes all souls,

is nothing but self-deception on the part of the soul itself, that She is bound to leave it whenever the soul wants to throw Her away, no longer liking to play with its self-created appearances that go by the names of creation, preservation and destruction. So we see that this ever-changing eternal creation is nothing but a series of self-imposed struggles of the eternal Self who, for some reason, does not like to remain at rest within Himself.

V

THE VEDANTA

VEDANTA means the latter portion of the Vedas. So before we can understand the Vedanta, we must know something of the former portion of the Vedas, i.e., the Vedas proper. The Vedas were originally one. Sri Krishna Dvaipayana, seeing the materialistic tendency and the mental inferiority of the people of the Kali age, divided the Vedas into four sections—Rik, Yajus, Sama and Atharva. The word Veda is from the root *Vid*, 'to know'. So Veda means science, for the word science also is derived from 'scio' or 'I know'. The modern age glories in thinking that it is exceptionally scientific. Let us compare modern science with that science which goes by the name of the Veda. Modern science treats of the whole Universe, and it has found out the indestructibility of matter. It has also taken up for consideration the human mind and the soul. But unfortunately its conclusions are not definite. Some plainly confess that it is not possible for them to know about the existence of the soul, while some others doubt and still others ignore it. They have given us this idea of the Universe, that it is guided on all sides by blind forces. An unconscious, dull, material Universe is the picture we have of our environment. It is a soulless, dead

Universe. This is the picture given by modern science.

Not so the Vedas. The Vedas also have taken up for consideration such subjects as the human mind and the soul, and have arrived at definite conclusions. The Vedas have taken up also the subject of the Universe. But they have found it a living Universe, not dead,—a Universe permeated by an infinite Soul, all-powerful and all-perfect. But it might be said that this is a mere assertion, and it might be asked, “What are the arguments to prove that there is such a thing as the soul, existing before and after this life and eternal in its nature?” The first answer is that we must realise it; then there will be no need of questioning. There are also many rational proofs. One of them is the following: Try to imagine your own destruction. In order to do so, there must be one who imagines it. Try to imagine his destruction; in order to do so another person is necessary. Thus we cannot imagine our own destruction, cannot completely annihilate ourselves. So it is impossible for us to be destroyed. “That ‘I’ exist—as to this, what man can entertain any doubt? Even if there be any doubt, he who doubts is the self.” This is what Sankaracharya wrote. Later on, Cartesian philosophy taught the same to the West. Descartes began to doubt everything; at last he found it impossible to doubt the doubter. Hence his memorable saying, “*I think therefore I am.*” Thinking and doubting are synonymous; for when you arrive at a conclusion after doubting, you know clearly about the subject and then you cease to think. So he established that “I” exist. Whatever exists is something. Whatever

does not exist is nothing. Something can never become nothing. I was never nothing and can never become nothing. *Being* can never come out of *non-being*.

Again, studying man's nature, we can see that he cannot but be immortal and eternal. When we study a living being, we study its likes and dislikes. Whatever it dislikes, is unnatural to it. Suppose you take a fish out of water and place it upon the peacock throne of the Emperor Shah Jahan. Would the fish be gratified? The fish would rather say, "Throw me into a pool of water." The natural abode of the fish is water and not land. Hence it likes water and dislikes land. Let us take our likes and dislikes. Everyone wishes to be living, not dead; to be happy, not unhappy; to be wise, not ignorant or foolish. This clearly indicates that life and not death, happiness and not misery, knowledge and not ignorance, is the essence of our nature. Hence the Rishis of India have written that the soul is not transitory, that it does not disappear with the death of the body, that it is naturally blissful. It is Sachchidanānda, eternal, all-knowing and all-blissful. This is the nature of the soul. And it has been demonstrated in many other ways. The question arises: If it is a fact that you are eternal, all-knowing and all-blissful, how is it that you do not know many things? You are really eternal, all-knowing and blissful, but you have so far forgotten your true Self that you are not able to know it. You identify yourself with the body and believe in your embodied self so much that you never can dream of your infinite Self; you are even disposed to laugh at a man if he tells you that you are limitless. The soul is infinite; the body is finite. So when

you identify yourself with the body through ignorance, your knowledge, pleasure and life also become finite. If you can separate yourself from your body and mind, then, and not till then, will you be able to realise your true nature. Then you will be able to know all, to possess all, and to realise that everything is within yourself.

So the Vedic philosophy is positive as to the eternal nature of the soul: but there are differences of opinion as to its size. Some say that it is infinite; others, that it is infinitesimally small; still others, that it is not too big or too small, but of a middle size. As far as we can make out, however, from the Vedic texts our conclusion is that all sizes are possible with it. "It is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest," says the Upanishad. How to understand this rationally? We know that two extremes meet. Extreme heat and extreme cold have the same effect. These are facts which none can deny. Again, by the word "biggest" we mean the largest form imaginable. If there is any imaginable form bigger than the biggest we call that by the name of "the biggest". So "bigger than the biggest" must be unimaginable, or inconceivable. Similarly, smaller than the smallest is also inconceivable. Now all conceptions take place at a certain time, in a certain place, and as an effect of a previous cause. Hence that which is beyond the plane of conception must be beyond the plane of space, time and causation. It is a fact that things are separated by space, events are separated by time, and causes are separated from effects by the law of causation; so when things are beyond the reach of these three separating principles having nothing to

divide them and thus make them many, they must be inseparable, and hence one. So, that which is smaller than the smallest must also have to be bigger than the biggest. Hence the two diametrically opposite qualities are applicable to the same being that goes by the name of "soul". Since all forms exist between these two opposite poles, and the soul is the basis of them, it necessarily follows from this that all forms belong to the soul. This also decides the question as to the number of souls. Being localised beyond space, time and causation, they cannot be many, but absolutely one, one without a second. Therefore the idea of the plurality of souls is based upon sheer ignorance.

When a positive quantity changes into a negative one, with the gradual change of an angle or of the position of a luminous point, it must have to pass through a neutral point that is neither positive nor negative, or in other words, the zero point. When a man has some property, he may be called a positive man; when he has not only no property to call his own, but on the contrary owes money to others, he may be called a negative man. But when he neither owns property, nor owes anything to anyone, he is said to possess nothing or zero. Hence the quantity zero is neither positive nor negative; and so when a positive quantity gradually changes into negative, it must pass through the neutral point of zero. For instance, when the pencil of light issuing from a luminous point placed at a distance from the principal focus of a double convex lens is incident upon the lens then the divergent rays of the luminous point traversing through the lens will all meet at a point called the conjugate focus, the distance of which from the

principal focus will increase as the luminous point is brought nearer and nearer to the principal focus. When it is brought very near the principal focus, the distance of the conjugate focus will increase immensely; when it coincides with the principal focus, the conjugate focus will be infinitely distant from the former, or it will be nowhere. But when the luminous point is removed a millionth part of an inch towards the other side of the principal focus, then the conjugate focus will give up its positive nature and at once shift its position from the positive to the negative side. This shows that there is no gap between infinity and zero, and hence that which is bigger than the biggest is also smaller than the smallest.

When an angle increases steadily from a very low degree, its tangent also increases in value from a fractional to an integral quantity, till that also increases to a limitless quantity or infinity. But then, if the angle of ninety degrees increases by one-millionth part of a second, simultaneously the tangent changes from infinity to a minus or negative quantity. But as we have seen that no positive quantity can pass into a negative one unless it passes through the neutral quantity or zero, we are compelled to conclude that there is no gap between infinity and zero, or in other words, they are both one and the same. As zero is bigger than any negative quantity, we cannot call it nothing. A form or figure is that which is bounded on all sides by one or more lines. Hence infinity, which is without any boundary line, must be formless. Zero also, being smaller than the smallest, is formless. Hence infinity and zero are both one and the same.

In the Vedas the individual souls, are regarded as

finite and at the same time eternal. These souls take their birth in higher or lower worlds according to the merit or demerit of their deeds. As long as these souls are not able to know their infinite nature, so long identifying themselves with finite bodies and taking upon themselves the weaknesses and imperfections of those bodies, they will have to drudge like slaves in higher or lower spheres of existence until the light of wisdom reveals their true nature. The study of infantile nature also points to the eternal nature of the soul. Every child is born with certain aptitudes and tendencies. Science teaches us that every habit and the tendencies born out of it are the results of repetition. The tendencies born with the child must have been acquired in a former life and in a former body ; for in this life it cannot have acquired them. Again when a man dies, he dies with many desires unfulfilled and with the hope that they will be fulfilled in a future life. So the soul incarnates to fulfil those desires. Death, therefore, is not actually death, as, when one suit of dress is worn out, you throw it away and get a fresh one, so you throw away your worn-out body and get another. To get rid of the body once for all is not an easy affair. The individual soul is full of innumerable desires. Therefore it will have to take many bodies before it will be able to free itself from them. And it is constantly struggling not to be chained down to any body.

But Jaimini, one of the greatest philosophers, says that the soul has not to throw away the body ; for it is through the body that the soul enjoys everything. So body is good. By performing properly certain works prescribed in the Vedas, the soul can acquire

pleasure here, and, after it passes away from the world, in a place called heaven where there is no misery and where man can realise whatever he wants. There is also a place of utter misery called hell. Where are these places? The same ignorance which makes you think that the world is outside yourself, also makes you think that heaven and hell are outside yourself. They are both really in man, in consciousness. Suppose that, when a man is sleeping soundly, he is taken to heaven and made to stay there for two thousand years in that same sleeping state, and that then he is brought back to the earth. He would not then know that he had been to heaven, because heaven was not in his consciousness. So also if he is to know that he was taken to hell and punished, the punishment must take place in his own plane of consciousness. One exists really as long as one is conscious of one's existence.

Now Jaimini says that if enjoyment be the highest ideal of man, that enjoyment can be had in heaven by anyone who merits it, through the performance of prescribed works and avoidance of those that lead to hell. Then why should anyone struggle to shake off this body? His philosophy preaches Karma or ritualistic works preached in the Vedas. The Vedas, after studying the nature of the Universe and of the souls that dwell in it, have arrived at a right conclusion as regards the method of action which each soul will have to follow in order that it may live very happily here as well as hereafter. Hence these Vedas have provided a set of injunctions prescribing certain actions and prohibiting certain others. So the practical side of them specially treats of Karma

or action, and for that reason it is called Karma-kanda.

We in modern times want an explanation as to how one can go to heaven by doing certain rituals. The Vedic philosophers have given the proper explanation. They discovered the nature of matter and of individual souls, which are eternally lorded over by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-gracious and infinite Being who regulates every movement of the material universe. They say that this Supreme Being has invited all souls, from the highest to the lowest, to this banquet hall of infinite space. Souls are eternal; hence their hunger also is infinite; and nothing short of an infinite dish can satisfy such a hunger. The Universe is that infinite dish, spread in the infinite hall of eternal space. The whole Universe is really the food for all souls. There is hunger not only in our stomachs; there is hunger in our eyes, in our tongues, in all the other senses. The eyes hunger for forms, the ears hunger for sounds, the tongue hungers for tastes, the skin hungers for touches, the nose hungers for smells. And the mind stores up all these sense-hungers in the bag of memory, and has its own hunger for prying into the mystery of creation. Thus the whole Universe is necessary to satisfy all these hungers. The five organs of activity—the hands, the legs, the organ of speech, the generative organ and the rectum—have all their special hungers. So altogether there are eleven sorts of hungers.

Also we have three different moods. We are sometimes happy and jubilant, wide awake and fully conscious. This is called the Sattvika mood. Sometimes we are partially conscious and very active.

This is the Rajasika mood. At times we are almost unconscious, idle and lazy. This is the Tamasika mood. Under the influence of these three moods, these eleven organs of ours come to have thirty-three sorts of desires or hungers. With such hungers or appetites, each soul is born. Some mysterious and irresistible power has brought all of them here to give them a good treat. If we examine our nature, we shall find out for ourselves that we have not come here according to our will, but in obedience to the will of an all-powerful Being whom it is impossible to oppose. If we were given the choice of selection before our birth, we would select better environments than those we find ourselves in. We are, every one of us, dissatisfied with our environments and endowments, and want something better. Even the emperor is not satisfied with the state of affairs in which he has been placed. So some superior Power must have brought us here to serve Its own purpose more than ours. We are all hungry, thirsty and needy souls. We have already seen that thirty-three sorts of desires constantly trouble us; and it is also a fact that each sort has millions of objects in view. So the objects of our desires must be thirty-three multiplied by millions, or thirty-three millions. And we are struggling to fulfil these limitless desires in a limited lifetime without any success.

In the course of my previous lecture on the Universe, I showed that the Universe can exist only in the mind and not outside, since it is not a simple, elementary entity, but a composite one, made up of three factors,—the seer, the seen, and the illumining or unifying principle. Besides the temporary and finite universe of an individual soul, having birth and

death, there is also an eternal and infinite Universe, which history and science hold out to us. Such a Universe can exist only in an eternal and infinite Seer or Mind that goes by the name of God ; and that God must be absolute, self-existent and one, because there cannot be two infinities. That absolutely one, all-knowing and all-powerful Being has brought us all in this big banquet hall, and by His innumerable powers manifested as the minor gods, has been satisfying our innumerable desires for eternity.

Jaimini's teaching amounts to this. Why should we want to leave or go away from this nice banquet hall? It is foolish to do so. Satisfy these gods and have your wants supplied. When you are feasting in a banqueting hall, you will not get what you want if you quarrel with those who serve the dishes. So our duty should be to propitiate the gods who minister to our wants. The Vedas relate to the ways and means of doing this. Remain in the Universe, please the gods, and make yourself happy. You should not try to go beyond this. Why not?—one may ask. Because we are not our own masters. We are in the clutches of a Being of irresistible powers that has brought us here. Let us see whether it is friendly to us, or whether it wants to enslave us, poor souls, torn with hungers numbering thirty-three millions. Looking towards ourselves, looking towards the infinite dish in the shape of the Universe, we cannot impute any bad motive to that Being, as that would be simply blasphemy. It is the best and kindest friend we have, since It has taken our thirty-three millions of cravings into consideration and is incessantly meeting those desires with Its thirty-three millions of powers, each of

which is perfectly able to satisfy a particular hunger of all the innumerable guests, who are dining in the infinite banquet hall of eternal space. Each such power, for this reason, goes by the name of a god, and thus we have got thirty-three millions of gods, all united in one Supreme Being, ministering to the needs of countless guests, who are eternally entertained with this ever-full and ever-satisfying dish of the Universe.

Many people actually stop here and do not aim further. But to some this slavery to the gods is revolting. They say: "Why should we be so dependent? We should be masters; we should be free. Are we really slaves? Will our hungers never come to an end? Are we to pray eternally to the gods for this or that thing? No. We do not want them." But how to get rid of all this? We must realise that universal God, in whom all these innumerable powers are centralised.

I am separate and distinct from my body and my mind. All desires are localised in my organs only, and not in me. I survive the destruction of this organism of mine, and so I am distinct from all these desires. To have desires or wants is to be a beggar. I do not like to be a beggar and I am not one; so my highest duty should be to go away from my senses, from my mind, from my gross, subtle and causal bodies, or from the five sheaths (Kosas) that enshroud me in ignorance. The moment we go away from these, desires fall off from us, just as the petals drop from the flower when the fruit grows. The soul has no hunger, no want. My true nature is all-blissful, infinite and perfect. This is the teaching of the

Vedanta, or the latter portion of the Vedas. The Vedas stop with the Universe; with the innumerable gods that rule over it, and with the eternal struggles of the souls to get happiness here and here alone. But the Vedanta says that nothing exists outside yourself, that the whole Universe is in you. God is inside you. He is the only solution of the otherwise insolvable problem of life and death. It is for Him that the human soul has been panting without knowing it. Imprisoned as we are in the body and the mind and in the maze of this phenomenal world, how can it be possible for us to find God? The real lord of ourselves is the Infinite One beyond all space, time and causation. All the worlds vanish when a man realises Him. He alone is my goal. He is in me, nearer to me than myself. My Beloved, for whom I have always been panting in the outside world, is in me. So let me dive deeper and deeper into my own self to find Him. This is the dualistic mode of realising God, according to Vedanta.

Some people think that to realise God fully one must rise from dualism to monism. This is not true in every case. The dualist, by his own method, attains the highest; he wants nothing higher. There are four forms of Mukti or salvation from misery—Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya. Salokya-mukti fulfils the highest ambition of man by enabling him to live in the same place with God. Samipya brings the perfected soul very near God in the relation of His most beloved son or servant. Sarupya fills the mind of the perfected one with so much love for his Beloved that he sees, hears, feels, desires and thinks upon none but Him; so much so that his appearance

becomes transformed into that of his Beloved. On the other hand Sayujya or Kaivalya merges the perfected soul in Divinity, even the least separation between the two being impossible. When any one of these is realised, man becomes perfect. Mukti means perfection. None will give it up after getting it, as each kind of Mukti is perfect in itself. Through Bhakti or devotion, Mukti is very easily realised. It gives the lover his Beloved. After finally reaching Him for whom the soul has all the time been panting and struggling, is there any more work for it to do? In Him it rests. Him it feels to be the highest. This is the final goal preached in the dualistic interpretation of the Vedanta.

The monistic method of realising God is almost the same. The monist also rebels against the slavery of passions and desires. The Vedas say that the soul is bound by three Gunas (ropes), Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The monist breaks off all bondages one after another, till at last he realises his freedom. The very first lesson to Arjuna by Sri Krishna runs thus: "Go beyond the dualistic conceptions of pleasure and pain, and of 'I' and 'Thou'. Know that you are changeless, infinite and perfect." In this way the monist discovers that there is nothing to limit him, and then he realises the infinite nature of his self. To say that he loses himself even as the dew drop merges in the ocean, is only by way of helping the understanding. The monistic conception does not destroy the individual. On the contrary the individual who was subject to birth and death, who was weak and ignorant, knows himself to be eternal, infinite and all-wise. Here there is no destruction of individuality. The man has been

awakened from his false dream that he was finite. This is the Prabuddha or awakened condition, in which one realises that one's true nature is eternally wise and blissful.

In the dualistic method enjoyment is the ideal. In the monistic method freedom is the ideal. By the first the lover gets his Beloved at last, and by the second the slave becomes the master. Both are sublime. One has no need to go from one ideal to the other.

VI

BHAKTI

THE Vedanta is regarded by both the monists and the dualists as the most infallible truth. But while the monist looks at it with the eye of discrimination, the dualist views it more with the eye of emotion. Both are actuated by the feeling of fear, and take refuge at the feet of the Lord. The one tries to ignore the existence of fear by regarding it as the outcome of ignorance; the other admits its existence and wants to be freed from it through the help of the all-powerful God; The path of devotion is taken by those who are emotional. This path is, therefore, more popular and more easily understood; for it is far easier to love and hate than to ratiocinate. So Bhakti, the path of devotion, is intended for all people, and for all times.

Its philosophy is very simple. It starts with the idea of weakness. Every man must admit that he is weak. He cannot by himself get over his weakness. His inner nature detects the weakness, but he feels himself powerless to drive it away. To whom is he to go for help? Only to one who can save him from all weakness and all miseries. He sees that the highest earthly power cannot save him from old age, disease and death. So he looks up to that all-powerful, all-gracious Being and takes refuge at His feet. This is the philosophy of Bhakti. We must go to

God. To do so we must go beyond the Universe ; for living in the Universe, we are forced to see the creation only, and we lose ourselves in its inextricable meshes through the forms of all we love most dearly. Hence God should be worshipped by all His devotees.

If we analyse this sort of love towards God, we see that it cannot be called real love. God is universally defined by all religions as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the Universe. Because God is all-powerful and all-gracious and can save us from our weakness, therefore it is desirable to worship Him. This is a purely utilitarian attitude. Can a sycophant ever have real love ? The millionaire is loved for his money. It is not a personal love: When he has lost his wealth, he is disregarded by those who pretended to love him before. The powerful man is respected because he is powerful and not for his own sake. This, however, is no love. In true love the lover should love his beloved even if he is in the worst condition. Sita's love for Rama did not fail when he was exiled by his father ; rather it increased a thousandfold. Those who worship God only for the utilitarian reason that He is all-powerful, cannot be called real lovers. Such devotion is based on prudence. Being weak and miserable and unable to direct himself properly, man must place himself under the guidance of the Almighty. Thus we have been taught to worship God, to meditate upon him, and to repeat His sacred name.

One of the greatest teachers of humanity, Sri Ramakrishna, has taught us that the glory of the Lord is not so much in His omnipotence, His infinit

majesty, His irresistible will, as in His condescension to stoop to the level of His devotee in the capacity of one equal to or even inferior to Him. Sri Krishna, who is the human embodiment of the infinite One, says: "Those who give up all other thoughts and exclusively worship and meditate upon Me, I look after and provide for them." Again he says: "Those who are more inclined to the world, such as women and the commercial and serving classes of people—even they realise the highest ideal, if they take refuge in Me. Even a man of very low propensities should be regarded as a holy man, if he worships Me with exclusive devotion. His ways are perfectly right. This man will soon become religious and realise eternal peace. So, O son of Kunti, proclaim before the world that My devotee is never thwarted in any way."

How are we to reach Him? "Whoever will offer me some leaves, some flowers, some water, that I shall accept, if offered with a heart full of devotion." It is to be noted that the condition demanded is—"if offered with a heart full of devotion". But is it not officiousness on the part of a man to offer that which does not belong to him? Does not everything belong to God? Flowers, leaves, sandalwood paste, even our own selves, the whole Universe, all belong to God. Still they can be offered, if offered with devotion. There is one thing that does not belong to God—love. This love I can direct towards my wife, children and worldly things. It may even degenerate into lust and avarice. It is fully my property. Therefore the Lord says that if the offerings are made to Him with love and devotion, which do not belong to Him, He accepts them.

The philosophy of Bhakti is not very abstruse. Plain, simple children like Prahlada and Dhruva could understand it; for love is the nature of every human being. On account of the intense love of His child-like devotees, who do not care to know anything about the infinite perfection of their Beloved, who dislike to philosophise about His conceivableness or inconceivableness, the formless infinite God becomes formful and appears as such before them. The devotees then realise what they regard as their only goal. Sri Ramakrishna Deva used to give us the following illustration. Water has no definite shape, and so takes the shape of any vessel that holds it. But intense cold sometimes makes it assume the shape of icicles and the like. Even so God, who is naturally formless and hence nameless, assumes a form for the sake of His devotees. Being all-powerful and all-gracious He can have form or no form. "Whoever wants to realise Me in whatever manner, I fulfil his desire. All people are walking through path marked out by Me." He, being all-powerful and all-gracious, can sacrifice everything for the sake of His devotees. He sometimes breaks His own word, to allow the devotee to keep his promise. Examples are not wanting in our books. Sri Krishna promised not to carry any weapon in the great war of Kurukshetra. He was helping the Pandavas with his sage advice only. He served those devoted ones in the capacity of Arjuna's charioteer, simply watching and directing the course of events. Bhishma, the commander of the opposite party, was made to reveal some very important secrets to Arjuna through the strategic plans of Sri Krishna. At this, Bhishma vowed to make Arjuna's charioteer

break his promise next day. The battle raged with all fury on the morrow and the old veteran warrior, Bhishma, fought with tremendous fury, spreading havoc in the ranks of the Pandavas. Arjuna was pierced through and through by the sharp arrows of his grandfather. He felt exhausted on account of profuse bleeding. Sri Krishna marked it. He could not bear to see his friend reduced to this condition by the most veteran of all soldiers, and cried out in wrath, "Thou son of Ganga, is this the way to fight with young boys? How cruel thou art! Now I am going to destroy thee and all thy army in a trice. Look at my irresistible power." So saying, he jumped from his seat, caught hold of a detached chariot-wheel, and ran towards Bhishma to deal him a deadly blow. At this the commander of the Kauravas threw away his bow, and clasping his hands in all reverence, stretched forth his grey head to receive the blow, saying: "O Lord, the servant is ever ready to get such a rare boon from his eternal Master. Come, come, and end my earthly existence, which is Thine and Thine alone. Take Thou what Thou gavest. For nothing is mine, all is Thine." Hearing this, Sri Krishna remembered his vow and returned to his seat ashamed.

The love of God, therefore, is the surest safeguard for all people and all time. If we cannot help serving those who are stronger than ourselves in every way, it is always advisable to serve one who is the strongest in the whole Universe. God is that one Being without a second, who is the infinite repository of all that is good or desirable, and in whom no evil has any place. He is omnipotent and omniscient, without any equal or superior. Thus, if somehow or

other we can make friends with Him, realising Him either as Father or Master, our safety here as well as hereafter is ensured.

But I am not disposed to call this true devotion. True devotion is selfless. Whether the Beloved is rich or poor, still the devotee's whole soul is for Him and no one else. He does not want anything from God. He does not care to know whether God is all-powerful or not. He knows Him to be his Beloved; that is all. He always wants to give something to God, but never wants to get anything from Him. The true lover of God must be more than perfect. For a perfect man may be self-contained and self-satisfied, he may not have the power of satisfying others; just as a reservoir of water, full to the brim, is self-contained and lives only in itself. Not so the perennial spring; which is not only full in itself, but also springs out of itself with overflowing munificence for the sake of others. A true devotee is like that. He lives not so much for himself as for his Beloved and for those who belong to Him.

The more we can love Him, the more can we make ourselves as pure and as glorious as His eternal Self. Hence this Bhakti-marga, or the path of devotion, is the easiest, best and most practicable of all paths. In order to be charitably disposed towards others, a man must be more than ordinarily rich, as only such a one can support himself and his family and many more with ease, and not others. So in order to be a true lover of God one must know one's own perfect nature, which is beyond hunger, thirst and other wants. True love comes after the realisation of one's true Self or Atman, which is perfect in every

way. The knowledge of the Self makes a man realise his eternally blissful and all-knowing nature. It makes him quiet, peaceful and unconcerned with the Universe. It takes him beyond space, time and causation. He becomes self-contained and self-satisfied. The thought of others has no place in him, for where he is, there is no one else besides himself. The knower, the knowledge, the known have all merged in an eternal and all-blissful consciousness. This is what is called perfection. But we read in Srimad Bhagavatam: "Even such perfected souls, who are wholly satisfied with themselves, who have nothing more to learn, and who thus are silent, love the Infinite One, the Lord of the entire universe, disinterestedly. Such is His irresistible charm!"

Such people alone are qualified to have true love towards God. They want to get nothing because they know they are perfect and infinite. After knowing that alone, they can aspire to give something to God. This is selfless and pure devotion. The other is rational, selfish and dualistic, and is based upon prudence, because a devotee wants to get the greatest profit with the least exertion. But the true lover wants to gain nothing and is ready to lose everything. This pure love is nowhere else to be found except at Sri Brindavan, where all the lovers of Sri Krishna never wanted anything from him. The child Krishna was the favourite of everybody. The mother wanted to give the best things to her child. The cowherd boys wanted to bring him the fruits they picked up. If you read the pastoral life of Sri Krishna, you will find true love of God described in all its glory by Vyasa in the tenth book of Srimad Bhagavatam.

There God is made inferior to His devotees and not all-powerful. He begs of His devotees who are always ready to serve Him. He, the omniscient, commits blunders to be corrected by them ; such a love is the highest love or Parabhakti, and this is the highest ideal. Wisdom only teaches that He is infinite and perfect—Sachchidananda. But this is more than wisdom itself ; for after realising that, the lover plays with his God ! An infinite being only can be the play-mate of the infinite God.

We, Hindus, are criticised by other religionists as worshippers of idols, because foreigners do not understand our method of worship. This worship of God in His personal forms is the highest form of worship ; for only that enables man to realise the highest love. Infinite God is not so glorious as finite God. Why ? God's nature is infinite ; but when that Infinite Being is forced to become finite, there is some power which is greater than that of the Infinite One, the power of love. In His infinite nature God has several times appeared to several of His devotees. But God as a man, other nations and other religionists cannot understand. They bring in the aid of philosophy to understand Godhead, and it teaches them that God can only be infinite and omnipotent and omniscient and all-gracious. But if He is all-powerful and all-gracious, He can be finite as well as infinite at any time ; for His Maya-sakti is inscrutable. With this power He can become finite, infinite and even something more. Through it the One appears as many, the infinite appears as finite. This Maya is also called Prakriti, the material cause of the Universe. He is the Lord of this Maya : apart from this, He is the

eternal One, always the same, beyond time, space and causation.

It is, therefore, possible for God to assume forms for the sake of His devotees. To pray to God for this or that thing is beggarly; such men can never become lovers of God. Our ancestors did not want to become beggars. If you go on praying in a church or a temple or a mosque for this thing or that, you cannot love God. But loving God is the highest ideal. How to popularise this ideal? Indian devotees found a solution. Some realised Him as Vishnu, some as Siva, some as Rama, some as Krishna, and so on. True love enabled them to realise God in His many benign forms. Why should they not worship God in those forms? Let us treat Him as our Friend or as our Master. Let us give Him a house, let us give Him everything that our friend or our master wants. In this way, instead of wanting anything from Him, we shall give Him everything. Such pure love born out of this method of worship, has borne good results always. Through this worship of the living forms of God the great saints of India have come into existence. Lord Gauranga and his innumerable followers were all worshippers of such Divine forms. Here in South India the Nayanars and Alvars worshipped these forms of God in their temples and became saints. In modern days the name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa is not unknown to you. He became a saint by worshipping such a Divine form represented as the Mother of the Universe.

You can now understand that this worship of images in temple is not merely intended to enable men to concentrate their minds. Some think that the

images have been introduced to enable the beginner to concentrate his mind. That may be true for some people. But the highest purpose which these living Gods of our temples fulfil, is to develop pure, unselfish love. So we should not ignore these forms of worship, thinking them useless. That would be foolish. God as the infinite Being is the natural God. But God in His finite form is more than natural. Blessed are we indeed to have been born in a country where we have been taught to worship God inside ourselves, when we close our senses ; or when we open our senses, to worship Him in His universal temple, whose azure vault is our perennial sky, illumined by the glorious sun in the day and by the sweet moon and diamond-like stars in the night, whose floor is our mother earth dressed in green, where just at the centre stands this living temple of God, my fleshly tabernacle, at whose centre, the heart, the living Lord of the entire cosmos, is eternally enthroned, smaller than the smallest and at the same time bigger than the biggest. If on account of our countless daily avocations we are apt to forget Him, then we are frequently reminded of His all-pervading Self by the innumerable spires of His temples, sanctified by His all-worshipful forms as well as by the devotion of His innumerable devotees.

THE SOUL OF MAN

TO
HIS SERENE HOLINESS
THE SWAMI BRAHMANANDAJI,
PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED
BY HIS DEVOTED SERVANT
RAMAKRISHNANANDA

PREFACE

THIS little book, comprising the four lectures delivered by me during the last Christmas, is intended for all humanity. It contains the gospel of the ancient sages of India, who declare, in the most unequivocal language, the eternal, all-knowing and all-blissful nature of man. According to them, man is rooted not in food and drink, not in climate and soil, not in body and mind, not in space and time,—but in Sat or Spirit which is absolutely one without a second. This good news they have brought to us, after having realised their own eternal, all-blissful and all-knowing nature, so that we also may be saved from the false fear of death and countless other miseries. These realisations constitute the ancient science of the Veda, consisting of two parts, the first of which is called the Veda proper or Karmakanda, and the second, the Vedanta or Jnanakanda. From this last part we learn that true happiness, true knowledge and true life should be sought inside one's own self and not outside. But alas ! almost all the men in the world are exactly doing the opposite. They cannot even imagine themselves to be immortal, and consider such a claim to be but a madman's dream. They are perfectly sure about the limited nature of their body and mind, and as such, regard the world to be their home wherefrom alone they expect to get knowledge and happiness, which they so much long for. By Self, they understand nothing more than this little 'I', bounded on

both sides by birth and death and the more the darkness of ignorance thickens around them, the more they make much of this poor little thing of an ego. Thus we see that ignorance, which is the cause of all miseries, has been troubling all men from the very beginning of time in the form of ego, making the eternal appear as non-eternal, the all-blissful appear as miserable, the all-knowing appear as ignorant, the all-powerful appear as weak, the infinite appear as finite, the master appear as slave. Hence the one duty of every man should be to eradicate this ego rooted in ignorance, with the axe of wisdom which teaches that man is infinite by his nature.

But the man of the world has been loving this ego so very fondly, not for one but for countless lives, that it is almost impossible for him to separate himself from its fell clutches. Some may intellectually comprehend its baneful nature and thus may have a mind to get rid of it, but when they make an attempt in that direction, they come away baffled, owing to its almost irresistible charm. For, is it not a fact that on this ego alone is based man's imaginary heaven, which he blindly regards to be permanent, and in which he finds his wife, children, friends, neighbours, name, fame and countless other things that make even this precarious life so sweet and dear to him?

Almost all the men in the world being so, how can this little book which preaches the renunciation of the ego, following the footsteps of the hoary sages of India, be of any use to humanity which is not going to profit by its impracticable advice? In answer we say, man may not have a heart to follow the path described herein, but certainly he is eternally restless for

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the goal that has been held out to him by the sages, and if nothing short of that goal can bring complete satisfaction to him, and if there is no other path leading to it, he must be made to go through it somehow or other. He may not have a heart at present to take up the path, but in this or some other future incarnation of his, when his imaginary heaven will appear to him in its true colour, the knowledge of the path leading to salvation will be a great boon to him. And so, although this book can help only a few directly, it can certainly help everyone indirectly. With this hope, it has been made to see the light, and to make it more acceptable to the modern readers, the truths of the ancient science have been garbed in the language of modern science, as far as it has proved practicable. So without further preface, let this little book speak for itself.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH,
MYLAPORE, MADRAS,
February 14th 1910.

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THE AUTHOR

I

SCIENCE, MODERN AND ANCIENT

All are mad, some after money, some after enjoyments, some after name and fame, and so on. Be not mad after the unreal, the transitory, but after the Real and the Eternal.

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA

MODERN science starts with two hypotheses, or as it wants to have them called, two primary facts. Man is the one, and the Universe around is the other. What does it understand by 'man'? An embodied being, a Mr. so-and-so having a certain nationality, a faith and a creed. In short it understands by the word 'man' an ordinary man of the world with sound common sense. Man is he who sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches by means of his senses, and thinks, feels and wills by means of his mind; and whatever he can observe and experiment upon by means of these senses, he regards that to be a fact, a reality. Everything has to come down to the level of his senses in order to be regarded as a reality, as they alone have the power of establishing the existence of an object by observation and experiment.

He also finds himself to be full of various wants, nay, he finds his whole life to be a series of almost incalculable wants, and to his great relief he finds out at the same time that the world around him has the power to remove them. But although he finds the

world to be perfectly capable of removing them, he has to force it to do so. He has to fight with his environment in order to get from it all that he wants. By mere coaxing words he can get nothing out of it. He has to wage an incessant war with it to get all he desires. That is why Charles Darwin, the father of modern evolutionism, has described life as a 'struggle for existence'; and he has pointed out that only the fittest survive amidst such a struggle. The poet also has described the world to be a battlefield in the following simple and forcible language:

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife!

Whether he wills or not, constituted as he is, he cannot keep quiet here, as that means death to him. He wants to gather power, and he finds out that knowledge brings that much-needed power to him. Formerly electricity used to be regarded as only a destructive force. But now that men have been able to know something about it, they have been able to make it very useful, as carrier of their messages, as motor power for their carriages, as illuminer of their cities and towns. The knowledge of steam power has facilitated communication from one place to another with incredible rapidity; and thus they are very hopeful of getting almost all things necessary from the knowledge of the universe in the near future. That is why there is an incessant struggle going on between man and Nature: and as a result of such struggle, man has been able to evolve science or right knowledge about persons and things. Wanting to know

about the heavenly bodies, he has evolved astronomy; wanting to know about the animal kingdom, he has evolved zoology; wanting to know about the vegetable kingdom, he has evolved botany; wanting to know the elements out of which the world has come into existence, the laws which govern everything around him, the constitution of his physical organism and the method of its working, the constitution of the world in which he lives and so on, he has evolved chemistry, physics, anatomy, physiology, geology and so on.

By studying matter he has found out its indestructible nature. Although the candle has been burnt out, by weighing the gaseous product of the burnt candle he has found out that not a particle has been lost. Thus matter, being indestructible, is real, and all material bodies are, on that account, real as well; and as the Universe is composed of material bodies only, it also must be real. By the study of this material Universe we get whatever we want. Hence its study is absolutely necessary. Speculation about the eternal nature of souls is useless, as, being immaterial, souls cannot be brought within the scope of observation and experiment. Now what sort of a Universe has been given to us by our modern science? Assuredly a soul-less one. It is a Universe that does not respond to our call; by sheer exertion, we ourselves are required to get out of it all that we want, both physical and mental. Again, the Universe is so very infinitely vast, and our capacities are so very deplorably limited, that it is absurd on our part to entertain any hope of knowing it as a whole and hence our knowledge about it will always remain undesirably partial.

The indestructibility of matter was not unknown to our most ancient sages. Kapila, Gautama, Kanada, Patanjali, Jaimini and many others knew its indestructible nature. By way of illustration, I should like to narrate to you the incidents that almost destroyed the dynasty of the Yadavas by bringing to an end the blissful career (Leela) of Sri Krishna and all his relatives, children and grand-children. Knowing the all-powerful Rama and Krishna to be their saviours in all crises, their children and grand-children became very proud, insolent and irreverent. They used to spend their time mostly in mirth and jollity. Of all the children of Sri Krishna, Samba was the most beautiful. One day some of the youthful children of Sri Krishna dressed him as a woman big with child, an iron mace serving the purpose of his embryo, and they took him to almost every house in Dwaraka to know whether the inmates who had known Samba very well could make him out in his new garb. And when they failed to recognise him, the jolly party had a very good laugh at their cost. As they were thus marching from one house to another, they came across the great sage Durvasa, and such was their insolence and irreverence that they took Samba even before him and wanted to know what child the seeming woman would give birth to. The sage, however, came to know all about the fraud by his spiritual insight, and being naturally of a highly choleric temper, replied, "The child that this seeming woman will give birth to will bring about the destruction of all of you and the whole family to which you belong, you stupid and irreverent fellows!" Then they were all taken aback, and knowing that their irreverence and vanity

had brought down the wrath of the Brahmana upon the whole family, were sorely afraid, and went directly to Baladeva's house to be advised as to what was to be done to obviate the curse. Hearing all, Baladeva told them to rub out the mace on a stone, and then there would remain nothing to be feared, as the mace, the cause of their anxiety, would itself not be in existence to bring any trouble to them. Accordingly, they went to a river side and rubbed out the whole mace in a short time, and threw away a very small residual bit of iron, deeming it quite harmless, and returned home very glad. But they did not know that the very minute particles of the rubbed-out mace grew into a forest of reeds on the river-side, and the remaining small bit of the mace was swallowed up by a fish which was afterwards caught by a fisherman. When its body was cut open, the little piece was found out by the fisherman and he gave it away to an archer who made an arrow-head out of it.

After a few weeks, Rama and Krishna together with their whole family had a grand picnic very near the place where the mace had been rubbed out. Wine was freely circulated amongst the whole party. At first, all were very jolly. Then they began to find fault with one another, which ended in a bloody quarrel. In the scuffle that ensued, they used up all their weapons and found nothing but the reeds that were standing hard by. They rushed towards them and each one plucked a reed wherewith to strike his opponent. Whoever was even slightly struck with one of them, had to fall down dead on account of the irresistible curse of the sage. In a few minutes, all died except Rama and Krishna, who had not taken

part in the quarrel, but were simply sitting quiet to see the destruction of all their children. When death brought silence over the whole place, Rama went out of his body by Yoga, while Sri Krishna, seeing himself left alone, climbed a young fig tree and sat on a branch with one of his legs hanging down. His beautiful feet dangling from the branch were mistaken by an archer from a distance for a very beautiful bird of blue feathers and red breast, and he shot at it that arrow whose head was made of the last remnant of the destructive mace. As soon as the arrow struck his foot, he fell down from his seat, but did not leave his body at once, as he wanted to see his friend Arjuna so that he might leave instructions to him to take care of his old father, mother and wives.

The above narrative shows the indestructible nature of matter. However you may try to destroy it, it will baffle all your attempts to do so. Some years ago, the scientists believed that they arrived at a final division of matter which could not be divided any more, and which, on that account, they named 'atom' (*Gr. a 'not' and temnein, 'to cut'*) ; but after the discovery of electrons which are finer than atoms, that theory has fallen to the ground. Again, ethereal particles are regarded as even finer than electrons, and perhaps some still finer particles may be discovered in the future, which will make even ether appear as coarse. Thus, however you may go on analysing matter, you can never reduce it to nothing. It will always remain something, and baffle all your attempts to destroy it. Thus modern material science has not been able to arrive at a final division of matter and so

it has no firm ground to stand upon, and as such, it is unreliable and empirical.

But, let us take up the conclusion of science and see whether we can make anything out of it. We have learned from it the indestructible nature of matter, and also its ever-shifting, ever-changing nature. Every material form is liable to change. Heat expands and cold contracts it. It admits of any number of divisions. The big ones become smaller, the smaller still smaller, and so on. So it is constantly changing. Now let us analyse the phenomenon of change. Whenever any form changes into another, the old form exists no more or dies, and a new form comes to exist or is born. So the words 'birth' and 'death' may be substituted for the word 'change'. Thus we see that every material form has to change or die unceasingly on a background which is changeless or is without birth and death. On account of this birthless, deathless and eternal background, the ever-dying material form is saved from destruction, as it is inseparably united with it amidst all its vicissitudes.

Now let us see what sort of a thing this eternal background is. Is it formful? No, as in that case it would also have to die like that which rests upon it. Hence it must be formless; and as every form is limited, that which is formless must be limitless or infinite. The finite form exists on this infinite background, but where does this latter exist? Does it exist in space and time? It cannot, since space whose existence depends upon the co-existence of things, and time whose existence depends upon succession of events are not independent, and have therefore beginning and

end—or are, in other words, finite. How can the infinite one live in the finite? Space begins to exist after the co-existence of things, and it ceases to exist when that co-existence ceases. Time begins to exist when two events occur one after another, and ceases to exist when no such succession takes place. Again, when two things co-exist they must be known to exist together, which means that one of them must be the knower, and the other the known. There must also be the mind for this knowledge to arise. So space conception must be in the mind. Succession of events bringing along with it two or more different ideas, also presupposes the existence of mind; for how can there be an idea without a mind to give birth to it? Hence also time conception exists in mind. Therefore, both space and time exist in mind. But is mind limited or limitless? That it is limited, requires no proof, and as such you cannot localise the limitless one in it. Now what else is there that exists besides mind, space, time and the Universe that has its basis in them? Only the Self; that alone remains. Is this Self limited or limitless? It is beyond the three Gunas (Nature's dispositions or bondages)—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—or the five Kosas (sheaths) comprising the three bodies, gross, subtle and causal. Having nothing to limit It, It is limitless. Here, therefore, we can localise the limitless background of limited material forms. But you may say that two infinities may clash against each other. Hence they cannot live together as one and the same, but must live separately. Let us take your affirmation for granted and let us then examine its validity. According to you, there are two infinities—one is conscious

and forms the background of all individual selves ; the other is unconscious, and forms the background of all material forms. Let them be called A and B respectively. We have already shown that A and B are beyond space and time. So, where A and B are, there is neither space nor time. Let us, therefore, not imagine that A and B live separately just as you and I are doing. Between you and me, space, one of the greatest separating principles, intervenes, and therefore our separation is possible. If there remains no space between yourself and myself, we both will become one. But you may say that although we may thus seem to be one, still we keep up our two separate individualities, and thus if we eliminate space away from between A and B, they may appear as one, though they are really two entities. To this we say, as far as space is concerned, you are perfectly right, but by hypothesis, we must have to eliminate time, another separating principle like space, from between A and B. In that case there should not be two distinct or mutually exclusive ideas conveyed by A and B, as two ideas coming one after another will keep up the idea of time, which we want to eliminate. Hence A and B must be absolutely one, or infinite must be absolutely one ; and being conscious of this oneness or changelessness or birth-and-deathlessness, it is infinitely and eternally blissful. It is the one soul both of mind and matter, of the internal and the external Universe. There is not a single material particle, however minute, be it an electron or an ethereal particle, which is not ensouled by It. That is why our forefathers used to find God everywhere throughout the whole Universe. Although it is the

one formless background of the whole Universe, it appears differently in different forms. To an ordinary man, who distinguishes one object from another, and one form from another, to whom the sun is not the same as the moon, the male is not the same as the female, it appears differently in different forms. Moreover, an ordinary man of the world is concerned with forms which he loves most dearly. He loves the forms of his parents, wife, children, friends, neighbours, and all the beautiful and charming forms wherever they are to be found. This is why that Infinite One, incarnating Itself as a Teacher, has taught to the men of the world: "Amongst the luminous bodies I am the sun, ... amongst the mountains I am the Himalayas, ... amongst the trees, I am the holy fig tree, etc. Whatever is grand and glorious, charming and majestic, know, O Arjuna, all that has come out of a part of My own infinite power." Thus we have been taught from time immemorial to worship each grand and glorious phenomenon in Nature as God Himself.

The old Vedic sages are looked upon with pity by Western scholars, as according to the latter, these baby-like people had no idea of God and therefore had to personify as living gods the inanimate powers of Nature. After what we have learned just now, this commiseration on the part of Western scholars is absolutely groundless and if any man is to be pitied, it is he who has allowed his ignorance to drive the soul out of the entire Universe, and place himself inside a dead body making himself as soulless and dead as the body itself. The Vedic sage never personified Natural forces. Personification is mere imagi-

nation. It is imagining life where there is really none. But if one sees a living being as living, there is no personification. The Vedic sage actually saw a living sun, a living moon, nay a living universe. Did Prahlada imagine a living God in the stone pillar? If it were mere imagination, then of it nothing could come out, as imagination is entirely false. He saw the living God inside the pillar, and so the living God had to come out of it to save His loving devotee.

Thus we have seen God to be eternal and infinite. Is He one with our souls? In that case, every one of us would be all-knowing like Him and there would not be any variety of souls. But that is not a fact. No man, as man, is all-knowing. When he frees himself from the limitations of body and mind even in this life, by means of one-pointed concentration (Yoga), he is then not a man; he is one with the Infinite One and hence becomes all-knowing. But an ordinary man who identifies himself with his body and mind, both of which are limited, can have only limited knowledge, and that alone he has. Is he also limited in his life? So long as he identifies himself with his body, he has his birth and death. But he is not only an embodied being but also a thinker, *i.e.*, he not only identifies himself with his body, but also with his mind. Moreover in his healthy or natural condition, he seldom identifies himself with his body; for the idea that he has got a body only comes to him when he is reminded of it by some local pain such as headache, colic, etc., or when the whole of it is burning, as it were, under a very high fever; or, in other words, the idea of his having a body only comes to him in his unhealthy or

unnatural condition. In his healthy or natural condition, he feels as if he has no body. So the natural man is more a mind than a body. With the help of this mind he is able to discriminate the permanent from the impermanent, the real from the unreal; and when he goes on examining and analysing himself with the help of it, he finds out that he is made up of three-factors—he himself, his mind and his body. He again finds out that his body is very changeful. It is incessantly changing ever since its embryonic condition, throughout babyhood, boyhood, youth, manhood, etc., and he finds out also that his mind is changing along with it as well. But though his body and mind may be changing, he knows himself to be the same man—the one man who was once a baby, then a boy, then a young man and now has become a grown-up man. He knows he has not changed along with the changes of his body and mind; and so he finds out that he is the one changeless factor amidst the two other ever-changing factors. Now, whenever we observe for a certain length of time a particular thing to be behaving in the same uniform manner, we cannot help believing that it will be going on in the same manner always, as there is an innate belief in the uniformity of Nature's workings in every living being, not only in men but even in lower animals. This intuitive faith enables us to determine the nature of everything, and makes the existence of science possible. Therefore when I see that I remain changeless, though my body and mind are incessantly changing all through my lifetime, I cannot help determining my nature to be changeless and eternal or without birth and death.

Man, by a little self-examination, is thus able to make out his eternal nature but he cannot realise his infinite nature until he transcends the limitations of his body and mind. This is the most difficult of all human achievements.

The next consideration is that if he is eternal, he must have been existing previous to his present life, and that he is going to exist even after it. Was he invested with a similar body and mind in his previous state of existence? A little self-examination again on the part of every man will show him that he reaps only the fruits of his actions. His good actions bring forth good and desirable fruits, while his evil actions bring forth evil and undesirable fruits. Another fact to be remembered is that, as we have just now seen, the eternal and infinite Being, whom we call God, equally existing everywhere, must be equally disposed toward all living beings. In Him there cannot be any partiality, as, being infinite, His love towards all His creatures must be infinite. From such a God we can never expect any difference of treatment as regards His children. Then how to account for the various conditions of His children? We see that one is in very affluent circumstances, while another by him is starving even from birth; one is honoured and respected, another is insulted and vilified; one is happy, another is miserable; one is wise, another is an idiot; one is strong, another is weak. Since these different circumstances must therefore be the results of different sorts of action on the part of God's children themselves, they must have been done in a previous state of existence; and as no action is possible without a body and a mind, the soul must have had a

similar body and mind previous to the present embodied condition. Thus, my present body has resulted from a past body, and similarly, my past body also was a result of a previously existing body, and so on without end.

Our future condition of existence too must be an embodied condition like the present, as when we leave this body, we carry along with us innumerable unfulfilled desires which we try our best to satisfy in the present life but never succeed in doing so. These unfulfilled desires must, therefore, make us search for another living organism with which it may satisfy them; and we must have to take up bodies after bodies until we shall be able to realise our all-perfect nature, free from all wants, all desires. Hence reincarnation is an established fact. This is the discovery of the ancient science. Upon this fact, the whole of the Veda is based. This is the one distinguishing feature of the Vedic religion from all the other religions of the world except Buddhism and religions analogous to it.

We are now in a position to understand the ancient science or the Veda. Both science and Veda have come from roots meaning the same thing. The Veda or ancient science differs from modern science in regarding the external and internal Universe to be pervaded by God. The ever-helpful Veda, knowing the limited capacity of an ordinary human mind, has not brought forth for it a limitless God, but has given to it only that much of Him in His various manifestations, which it can perfectly grasp, love and then realise. Man has got innumerable wants and the infinitely loving God also has innumerable powers to

satisfy all those wants and even more. Behind each of His innumerable powers He exists, and so each such power may be regarded as a separate god united in one Supreme Lord of the whole Universe. This does not mean polytheism. Thus, for the benefit of all men, the Veda has brought God nearer home to them than any other scripture of the world. Modern science has localised consciousness, intelligence and many noble and ignoble qualities in men and men alone, depriving the whole Universe of them. The ancient science, on the other hand, has seen the One, All-perfect, All-powerful Being, pervading and enlivening the entire cosmos as well as all the living beings that dwell in it. The votary of the modern science has to bring forth all his conscious energies out of his little limited self to subdue and bring the world under his control. The votary of the ancient science, not only helps himself but gets more help from the living God manifesting Himself through His creation in various forms, by subduing his egotism in order to acquire true knowledge and consequent blissfulness springing therefrom. Modern science has given only a limited life to man, bounded on both sides by birth and death, while the ancient science on the other hand has given eternal life to him by showing death to be merely a gateway to another life, and affirming that he existed and had several births before this birth, and is going to have many more births hereafter until he realises his infinite nature. For men of higher capacities, too, the ancient science has reserved the worship of the Eternal and Infinite Being, while for some others it has reserved the highest wisdom which enables them to realise their oneness with the Infinite Being, taking

them beyond the limitations of space, time and causation.

Thus we have been taught in the Isopanishad to see everything changeful in this Universe, pervaded by one Supreme Soul, and the opening verse of Srimad Bhagavatam teaches us that although the threefold manifestations of matter are in themselves changeful and fleeting, yet they appear to be real as the one Reality is behind them. From time immemorial, the phenomenal nature of the Universe was known to our ancient seers. By studying and analysing some of these phenomena they arrived at the knowledge of one Supreme Being pervading the whole Universe. Let us see how it was possible for them to do so. What is a phenomenon? Is it simple or elementary in its nature or a compound? Because it is a mere appearance, it cannot exist independently of a knower to whom it must appear, and besides, there must be something to appear. Then, out of their union, an appearance or a phenomenon becomes possible. Hence it is a compound and is made up of three factors, the seer, the object, and that which brings about their union, or as they are called in Sanskrit, Adhyatma, Adhibhuta and Adhidaiva. We now see that no phenomenon can exist without a seer or soul. Hence no phenomenon is soulless, or in other words, every phenomenon is infilled with a soul and hence is alive. The Universe is made up of innumerable forms, touches, tastes, smells and sounds, which go by the name of phenomena; and you are the one soul of all these which began to exist with your birth, and which will cease to exist with your death. So, along with you, your world arose; and along with you, it will set. But you

know that the world existed before your birth and it will exist even after your death. Indeed you know it to be beginningless and endless, sometimes manifesting and sometimes dissolving itself, since one of its factors is the indestructible matter which, in Sanskrit, is called Adhibhuta, as we have just now learnt. If this beginningless and endless creation is also an aggregate of innumerable phenomena, it cannot be soulless. It must have a soul of its own, which must be beginningless and deathless, that is, eternal, and as it must pervade the entire creation, it must be all-pervasive or infinite. This Eternal and Infinite Soul goes by the name of God, the eternal creator, preserver and destroyer of the Universe. Hence the Universe is never Godless or soulless. It is the manifested and living form of the Deity, much more living and infinitely more powerful than the living body, either belonging to you or me or anyone else. We cannot dissociate Him from the Universe, just as we cannot dissociate ourselves from our body as long as we deem ourselves to be men. Bhagavan Vyasa, after describing God as having the whole Universe for His body, the highest heaven forming the crown of His head, and the lowermost sphere (Patala) forming the sole of His feet, and the intermediate spheres forming the different parts of his body, says in the course of His description that such a vast God lives inside man. You are not to look far for Him; and He alone can remove all your wants, clear all your doubts, give you eternal bliss and peace, save you once for all from the darkness of ignorance by lighting in the chamber of your heart the eternal lamp of wisdom. This is what the ancient science teaches us. Can we call it old and barbarous as

modern science would have it called? We have been taught by modern biology that many thousands of years before, there was no man in this planet of ours. The blind soul was then encased in the protoplasmic body of amoeba which, in course of time, through a process of almost innumerable evolutions and surviving various struggles, has now evolved as man. Thus, according to it, the soul is emerging from utter darkness to more and more light, and it will have to remain always limited, being the gradual development of something perfectly limited. This conclusion is neither very rational, as we have seen, nor at all desirable. So we should not look down upon the conclusions of the ancient science which teaches that the entire Universe with all its living beings has come out of the infinite wisdom of God, the source of all life, light, peace and blissfulness. He, the Soul of our souls, is inside ourselves. From Him alone we can get whatever we want; hence we have to make friends with Him by loving Him more than we love the world with all its charms, that is, more than we love our earthly friends and relatives, more than we love all enjoyments of the senses, nay, more than we love ourselves.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna once gave us a fine parable and that is this. One morning two young friends went out for a walk. When they had gone a certain distance, they came by a very beautiful garden, and as the gate was open and there was none to prevent their going in, they were tempted to enter in. Everything was so very beautiful all round and everything appeared to be so very friendly, that they walked a considerable distance inside it, till one of

them, who was of a calculating nature, told his other friend, "I want to estimate the value of this beautiful garden. I want to know the number of mango trees, cocoanut trees, etc., that it contains. So, dear friend, you please walk alone hither and thither for sometime till I come back." So saying he left his side, and when the latter found himself alone, he wanted to go more inside. He saw a gardener working at a distance and went up to him and began to make enquiries about the proprietor of the garden. The kind gardener told him about the infinite goodness of his master and said, "My master is always kind towards everyone who goes to him. He never leaves this garden. You can go and see him if you like. Please proceed a few steps forward, and you will be able to see the nice little mansion where he always stays." Thus informed, the man thanked the gardener and hastened for the mansion and reached it in a few minutes. Entering it, he found the master, a beautiful-looking, simple and sweet gentleman, sitting in the front room, as if waiting for him. As soon as he entered, the proprietor got up and received him very kindly and asked him to sit down near him, and he talked so kindly to him that they became friends in no time. The master took his new friend by the hand, showed the many beautiful shrubs, plants, rare flowers and fruits, made him taste some very fine fruits, gave him a few fine and rare flowers to take home, and asked him to come here often. After enjoying his company for some time, the young man took leave of him, expressing his gratefulness for the kind treatment which he had just received from the good man's hand. On his way back, he saw his friend returning after a fruitless attempt

to calculate the number of trees ; for the garden was a very big one. When the latter saw his friend well refreshed and having some fine flowers with him, and came to know about his new friendship with the proprietor of the garden, he could not help crying out, " Oh ! what a fool I have been to have wasted my time in this way ! You are really wise, my friend. Yours is the enjoyment, mine is mere trouble."

From this parable we learn that the calculating spirit of modern science will never bring any definite knowledge to it, and it will always have to remain in the same darkness, in spite of the very few partial victories over some of Nature's forces, which it has won. So if we want to be really happy and really wise, if we want to escape repeated births and deaths, we should follow the path shown to us by the ancient science or the Veda. Blessed are they who obey the Vedic injunctions ; for it is they that will be ultimately illumined and saved, after clearly understanding the hollowness of earthly as well as heavenly enjoyments. For a man, who wants to be eternally happy through the guidance of the Veda, finds after enjoying heavenly life for several times, that even heaven cannot be the permanent abode which he so much longs for, and so in time goes to the higher teachings to be found in the latter portion of it. After following those teachings, he ultimately realises everything in himself and becomes perfect.

II

DETERMINATION OF CONSCIOUS
TENDENCIES.

EVERYTHING in this world has got its own peculiarity which distinguishes it from every other thing. This peculiarity determines its tendency. The mango on the branch has a tendency to go down, and the smoke which is hotter than the surrounding atmosphere has a tendency to go up as long as it is hot. But in such cases neither the mango nor the smoke knows its own tendencies, as both are unconscious. This unconscious tendency, virtue or quality inherent in things is properly the subject of modern science. But this morning we are to deal with conscious beings, tendencies which are inherent in conscious beings, tendencies which are cognised by the individual that possesses them. There are many people in the world who arrogate consciousness only to themselves and deny it to the lower animals. How can such people ever imagine trees and plants to have souls? But we have been taught by our forefathers that not only human beings not only the lower animals, but even trees and plants have souls. They are conscious. We can determine the tendencies of lower animals as well as trees and plants by studying them; for their tendencies are not very many. But when we come to determine the tendencies of man, we find a real difficulty; for the tendency of every man is different from that of his

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brother man. The tendencies of those who are moral are diametrically opposite to those of men who are immoral and so on ; and thus when we want to determine the tendencies of all humanity, it appears to be an impossible task.

Looking at our religious faiths, we find out that some people belonging to a certain religion hold views exactly opposite to those of others believing in another religion. While some hold that God has forms, some others hold that it is a sin to invest Him with a form ; and all act according to their own convictions. But although, when we try to study the various tendencies of human beings, we find it impossible to determine them, we arrive at such conclusions, only because we have not gone very near to the question. A village market appears from a distance as nothing but a chaos, but when we come near it, it does not appear to be so. The dealers are selling their articles systematically, and everything there seems to be in perfect order. A thing from a distance always creates some confused idea in us, but when we approach it and examine properly, we find that everything is systematic and well-regulated. Our great master Sri Ramakrishna tells us, "If you look at the sea from a distance, you will not be able to understand that the whole sea is full of salt. Because you cannot see the stars in the day, you cannot come to the conclusion that the sky is without them." So if we try to study anything from a distance, we are apt to misunderstand it, and hence such a study always proves to be almost fruitless ; but when we come very near the object, then we find that there is law and system behind it.

Man is active by his very nature. And what is the meaning of his activity? Why is he active at all? Activity presupposes want. Whenever we work, we work for something. And what is that thing which man wants? This is not a difficult question to answer; for every one knows what he wants. Man wants to be happy, and therefore whenever he wants happiness, he must exert himself in order to get it. So behind every activity in man we find there is want, and when we try to find out what it is, we find that he wants only three things. Firstly, he wants to be happy; secondly, he wants to know all, and thirdly, he wants to live for ever. These are the three wants and they bring out or call forth all his activities and latent energies. He wants to be happy and finds out that he is surrounded on all sides mostly by such circumstances that do not make him happy. So he finds out that he must struggle against such environments to get the happiness that is lurking behind. In the same manner his love for life makes him struggle for it. He wishes to live the longest term of life, and therefore struggles to find out all those means that will enable him to live healthily for the longest period of time. Health brings happiness and ill-health makes him miserable. So he wants to be healthy. He does not want to go away from the world, which he feels to be his real home. He again comes to know that knowledge is power and power will bring him happiness. Power will make him lord over, and independent of, all untoward circumstances, and so he wants to attain power through knowledge. Thus he has got an innate hankering after knowledge. All these wants make him constantly restless. He calls forth all his ener-

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gies, and with their help struggles to remove these wants. This struggle is what is called life. It is going on not only amongst human beings but also amongst the lower animals.

Now if we want to determine the nature of a certain animal, we do it by studying its likes and dislikes. Whatever it likes, we know is natural to it, and whatever it dislikes, we know is unnatural to it. To find out our own nature is not therefore very difficult. What do we like most? We like happiness most, and therefore to be happy is our nature. We like knowledge most, and therefore to be all-knowing is our nature. We like life most, and therefore to live is our nature and not to die. By studying our nature in this way, our old forefathers found out the true nature of the soul. Because the soul likes 'to be' and never 'not to be', 'being' or Sat is its nature. Because its nature is to be all-knowing, it is called Chit. Because happiness is its nature, it is therefore called Ananda. Thus it has been called Sachchidananda. It is found not only in human beings but also in lower animals and even in trees and plants, and so we have been taught by our great teachers, such as Sri Krishna and others, "God is living in the heart of all living beings, and it is He who is determining all their movements." And if that Universal Soul is in lower animals as well as in trees and plants, their nature and human nature must essentially be the same. Wherever there is any conscious movement of any sort in the animal and in the vegetable kingdom, every such movement is due either to get happiness or to acquire knowledge or to save life. But we are apt to arrogate to ourselves all con-

sciousness and all knowledge; and we regard the lower animals to have only some instincts. If you just study their nature, we shall be able to find out for ourselves that it does not differ essentially from our nature.

The little ant is moving in a hurry before me. Why? Perhaps it wants a grain of sugar that will make it happy, and so it is searching for it. It goes and catches hold of a certain thing, thinking it to be the much longed for particle but finding it to be something else on examination gives it up, and goes to another place. In this way it goes from one place to another, till at last it comes to the thing it wants—the little particle of sugar. The same thing is being done by a great Yogi while he tries to realise his highest ideal, which he regards to be all-blissful. The little ant here is trying to get that little particle of sugar, the source of all bliss to it, rejecting many other particles which are not of sugar. This is called the process of 'Neti, Neti' or 'not this, not this', i.e., I do not want anything else but the object of my desire. The Yogi in the mountain cave is also trying to fix his mind in that All-pervading Soul. He also says in his mind, "Let no other idea come to disturb me than the one ideal which I am trying to realise", and in this way he is constantly struggling to realise it. The process is the same. Ananda or bliss is the only one thing which determines all our movements. It you try to injure the ant, it runs away because it wants to live and be as happy as you. Now in order to save its life and to make itself happy, it must have knowledge sufficient to distinguish happiness from unhappiness, life from death. So

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'knowledge', 'bliss' and 'being' go hand in hand. But the primary thing is bliss. For this we, human beings, along with other living beings, are struggling. And out of such struggles we have evolved all our sciences, with the help of which we are able to minimise the power of misery. So we have seen that the same hankering after eternal bliss is actuating the movement of an ant. Nay, it is actuating the movement of plants too. The plant loves sunlight, and it spreads its branches towards the direction of light. A certain western scholar of experimental psychology has lately found out that the plants also have the power to understand us when we praise or find fault with them. This psychologist had two plants very near his room and every day he used to bless a certain plant and curse the other. He found out after a month that the plant he used to bless was growing very lustily, whereas the plant he used to curse did not grow properly. So we see that the power of understanding is also there. The plants know how to feel happy as well as unhappy. In the course of his teaching about the transcendental nature of the soul (Sat), the sage Aruni tells his son Svetaketu, pointing out a tree before him: "If, my boy, any one slightly injures the big tree before us by an axe or anything else at the root or in the middle or at the top, it will live and not die, but shed (tear-like) drops of juice. You should know from this that it is pervaded all over by the soul and lives happily drinking in profusion the life giving water from the earth. If that soul comes away from one of its branches it dries up; if from another, that too dries up; if from a third that also dries up; and if from the

whole tree, the whole tree dries up. Thus you should know the tree to be conscious and living." (Chhandogya VI. 11). Happiness always makes us expand ourselves, whereas unhappiness or misery makes us contract, as it were.

It is indeed a paradox to say that renunciation determines all our tendencies. Men have a great fear to renounce. They grasp firmly everything that they happen to possess. Renunciation is regarded as the exclusive duty of a monk (Sannyasin). A householder should not have anything to do with renunciation. But I tell you that it is the only thing which determines the movement of all the living beings throughout the Universe. We must have to renounce that which cannot give us happiness any more, in order to get something which makes us all happy. Everywhere, whether in the vegetable or in the animal kingdom, the law is the same. One thing in connection with this idea of renunciation is that it is regarded as very difficult and undesirable by most people. For when they look at a Sannyasin with shaven head going from house to house to get his meals (Bhiksha); and when they see that he has nothing to call his own, that he finds his house in a *Chatram* or under a tree, and that he is looked upon with hatred and pity by most of the well-to-do people,—the ordinary man of the world cannot help regarding such a life to be very undesirable, nay, fearful. That the Sannyasin does not put on good clothes, does not get good food, nay, sometimes he has to starve and thus lead a very wretched sort of life, are facts which very few can relish. Every man has a desire for enjoyment. If you have got a certain amount of money, say Rs. 10, in

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your hand, and I ask you to throw it away, you would not do it, because money makes you happy. But if I assure you by saying, "I will give you Rs. 20 if you do so," you will at once obey me; for by so doing, you will get twice as much enjoyment as the amount in your hand can give you. This is exactly what every one does when he renounces, be he a householder or a Sannyasin. In the Chhandogya Upanishad (VII. 23) Bhagavan Sanatkumara is exhorting Narada in this way, "That which is vast and limitless is the source of all bliss; there is no bliss in what is limited and little. The Infinite One alone is bliss; try to realise It."

If you want to realise the highest knowledge, you must give up this little knowledge of yours which is another name for ignorance. We are not disposed to give up the little to accomplish a higher end, overmastered as we are by the nameless power of Maya, which has the power even to delude God Himself. We find it narrated in Kalika Purana that when God incarnated as a 'boar, He lifted the earth from the nether worlds and thus made her fit for human habitation. After this grand achievement, He did not want to give up His boar's body and had a sow for His wife. He had many children born of her, and so much did He forget His own infinite and all-blissful nature due to engrossment in worldly life, that He never cared to go back to it for several years. At this, all the gods did not know what to do. None but God Himself has the power to rule over His creation, and, even He, forgetting Himself, was leading the life of a boar. Nor could these gods approach and ask Him to give up that wretched body; for what animal would ever

want to die, and who amongst all the minor gods would be powerful enough to take the boar's body away from the all-powerful Lord of the Universe? So Siva had to come and kill the boar with His trident after an arduous fight. That is why God in His incarnation of Sri Krishna says, "This divine and all-powerful Maya of Mine, no one can cross over." She represents the infinite power of the Lord and so makes the real appear as unreal and the unreal as real, pleasure appear as pain and pain as pleasure, light appear as darkness and darkness as light, and thus ties everyone to falsehood, making him completely forget the truth. In order to make ourselves more happy, more wise, we have to give up our old ways. Blessed are they who can thus give up, for by such renunciation alone a man can aspire to raise himself higher.

We have seen that we have lost sight of our real nature in the darkness of ignorance. This real nature is called Sachchidananda. As every struggle, physical or mental, is intended to make us more expansive and more exalted, blessed is he who struggles. Laziness is that sleep which keeps immersed in the utter gloom of ignorance, and when a man has been able to shake it off and has learned to struggle with his environment, he is a true fighter. He wants to fight out his cause so that he may recover the lost castle of his glory, where alone he can expect to have all his ideals realised. Thus he goes on struggling. He wants to live, but finds there is no life; for death is waiting for him. He does not like the idea at all and so struggles to avoid death with little or no success. He wants to know. The more he wants to have knowledge, the more he finds it impossible to realise it.

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His power is limited and the things he wants to know are innumerable and his life is too short for it. Still there is an infinite hankering after knowledge and life, and he himself is not able to find a way out of this-labyrinth of births and deaths. Then he puts this question to himself, "Is there no one to guide me? I myself am struggling in vain, and the more I struggle, the more I find out that the goal is far away." Thus gradually his vanity is crushed out and he finds that his self-exertion is next to nothing. This was exactly the state of mind Arjuna found himself in, when of his own accord he placed himself entirely under the guidance of his friend and teacher Sri Krishna, saying, "I do not know how to guide myself, I take refuge at Thy feet. Regard me as Thy disciple. Please direct me as Thou wilt." This becomes the attitude of every man's mind after he has struggled in vain for several lives to realise his goal. Then he earnestly searches for a true teacher and to his greatest satisfaction finds out that the teacher also is waiting for him.

It is a fact that whenever there is a feeling of want in any man, there is a corresponding object to satisfy it in the world outside him. If there is hunger here, there is food there ready for you. If there is thirst, there is water. Thus for any particular want of yours, the external world contains a corresponding object for its removal. When you find that it is not possible for you to guide yourself without the help of a teacher, you find that the teacher is also waiting for you. Now, this teacher is none else than the Lord of the Universe Himself in human form. That is why he has been thus described in the

scriptures: "The true teacher or Guru is Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer. He is verily the unmanifested Infinite One or Para-brahman. Therefore we should always be perfectly devoted to him." So Guru is none else than God Himself. That is the way Sri Krishna teaches us in the Gita. "Whenever you want to know what you should do and what you should not, refer to the scriptures." Now the scriptures or the Vedas are God's own words intended for the guidance of humanity. If, by God, we understand the all-pervading Being of infinite wisdom, He is the only being who can be infallible, and so the Vedas which have come out of Him, as naturally and spontaneously as breath comes out of us, can be the only reliable books that can guide us rightly.

By the scriptures we do not mean only the Hindu scriptures that go by the name of the Vedas, but the scriptures of the Buddhists, the Parsees, the Jains, the Jews, the Christians, the Mohammedans, etc., each of which is believed by its votaries to be infallible, coming directly or indirectly from God Himself. In fact, if we make a comparative study of all the scriptures of the world, we find that they do not essentially differ in their teachings. The same promise to confer the highest bliss on all men and women is to be found in all of them. The same renunciation of the little, the limited, has been preached in all of them in order that one may realise the vast, the limitless. There are indeed some minor differences on account of the different tendencies and capacities of men, which demand for each individual a particular method of procedure; but every such method is intended to

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bring the highest bliss to each and every one of them. Thus the goal is the same, and the more an individual goes near it, the more he finds that the differences are gradually vanishing away. Just as food satisfies the hunger of the body, religion satisfies the hunger of the soul. There are various sorts of food to satisfy the tastes of various men and women all over the world, and a food that may give immense satisfaction to a certain man may be looked upon with horror by another, as the animal food which gives perfect satisfaction to millions of men is looked upon with horror by a strict vegetarian. But all foods, whether animal or vegetable, whether cooked in one way or another, serve but one purpose, the satisfaction of hunger and consequent rest for the whole body. The chemical composition of all food-stuffs, however different they may be in appearance, in taste, in smell, in flavour, etc., must be the same; otherwise they cannot serve the same purpose. Hence, although they apparently differ, essentially they do not. Exactly the same is the case with all the different religions of the world. Essentially they do not differ, otherwise how can they serve the same purpose of bringing peace and bliss to all souls? Again, just as some men, who can digest and assimilate some particular sort of food which they have learned to take from their parents, nay, have inherited from them, and thus have been accustomed to take from their babyhood, can neither relish nor assimilate any other sort of food, similarly some souls can only assimilate and thus be benefited by a particular sort of religion which they have inherited from their ancestors and not by any other. So it is not

desirable that any one should give up his ancestral religion which is natural to him, and embrace another, as thereby he would be placing himself in a wrong path—a path which being unnatural to him, will not be suited for him to follow with ease and success. Therefore, religions having come from God for the guidance of humanity, are the only right paths to be followed, paths which alone can bring the greatest amount of happiness here as well as hereafter.

Morality is based upon human experience. I must be kind towards you if I want you to be kind towards me; for I learn by experience that kindness, love, honesty, hatred, malice, etc., are all reciprocal. Man is an image of his brother man, reflected, as it were, in the mirror of creation. If you make faces standing before a mirror, the image also will do the same; if you smile or weep, the image also will smile or weep. If I am sweet and kind to you, you are sure to be sweet and kind to me. Kindness or unkindness in me brings forth kindness or unkindness in others. So I should be good, loving, kind, honest, charitable, etc., if I want that others should be so towards me, and who is there that does not want to be kindly treated by others? Thus morality has to deal with this life only, whereas religion is based upon the eternal nature of man presided over by the one Lord; the one Soul of all souls.

A man may be moral although he may be irreligious and atheistic. The irreligious and moral man is a votary of his living organism, only in a little restrained sense, for the reasons given above, *viz.*, he finds out that the enjoyment, which is the one aim of his

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life, can be had as long as his body is well preserved. The idea of death horrifies him, and he tries his best to forget it by assigning the cemetery to a distant and unfrequented part of the village or town he lives in. On the other hand, the aspirations of a religious man are not confined to this life alone. The fear of death has not much hold on him. He shapes his present life in such a way as to make his future life more bright, more charming; and more sweet. He also does not transcend the idea of his being an embodied being; he also expects all enjoyments through the instrumentality of his body; he also is a man of many desires like the moral man. But while the moral man lives in his little well of a life, which is of a very precarious nature, the man of religion sails through the ever expanding river of life which flows on from time without beginning over a channel having innumerable turns of births and deaths, always taking him to places more and more illumined and bright, more and more peaceful and calm, more and more boundless and emancipating.

Thus the man of religion not only wants to be happy here but also hereafter, and he finds in his scriptures that if he wants to be so, he should please and satisfy the Gods by offering them those things which they love most. The gods are not different from the Supreme Being who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the Universe; but each of them is the manifested form of one of His innumerable powers. They are not the personifications of His powers. They themselves are persons emanated from Him, just as innumerable radii emanate from one

centre. The limited mind of an ordinary man cannot comprehend the limitless. That is why the limitless One becomes limitedly manifested as each one of these gods. So we learn from the Gita (III, 11, 12), "By offering oblations to the gods, glorify and propitiate them, so that thus propitiated they may shower their blessings upon you. Thus, mutually satisfying one another, you shall realise the greatest good. Propitiated by your oblations, the gods will bestow upon you many wished-for enjoyments, and hence the man who, without offering these in grateful acknowledgment to the gods, enjoys them himself, is verily a thief." Thus he who wants to be happy here and hereafter must worship the gods. Such a man directs the course of his life not by the dictates of his senses but by the dictates of the Lord Himself. He becomes religious, and with the help of that religion he is not only able to make himself happy here, but expects a far better sort of happiness hereafter. There are various injunctions in the scriptures to enable a man to lead a pure and pious life, by obeying which he acquires great excellence or merit, which is called in Sanskrit, *Punya*. With the help of this *Punya*, he, after this life, is exalted to a higher sphere of existence that goes by the name *Svarga* or heaven, where misery has no access at any time to break the ceaseless flow of sweet enjoyments, and where everyone gets whatever he desires.

Is this *Punya* to last for ever? No. For what has been earned during a limited life must be limited, and as such it enables the man to stay in heaven only for a limited period of time. If he wants to enjoy heavenly bliss for some more time, he must acquire

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fresh Punya by going down to the world and taking a human birth. This also he does not find to be quite satisfactory. He wants to be incessantly happy, and not now and then only. He wants to enjoy happiness in an unbroken manner, but this is nothing but a struggle, and this cannot be his ideal. So again he should struggle in order to recover his lost glory of unbroken bliss and peacefulness, and try to realise that highest ideal where no more struggle is necessary, and where he can say. "I have realised the Infinite One, and nothing else there is for me to know. I have escaped the hand of Death once for all. Eternal peace and bliss is mine." So, the Vedas no longer satisfy him and he finds out the right path for himself in the Vedanta. In the Vedas the object of his happiness is somewhere outside him, and he will have to struggle hard in order to get at it. But he learns from the higher scripture, the Vedanta, that the object of his happiness is nowhere outside but inside himself. It is a fact that there are certain things in the world outside, which bring out the inner happiness. Happiness is never outside the man, it is inside him.

He finds out the whole universe around him to be made up of two sorts of things, friendly and unfriendly. There are certain friendly things in the world and many more unfriendly things. In the presence of a friend we hide nothing, we reveal to him all the secrets of our hearts, which expand at his very sight; we reveal our true selves to him. But when an enemy comes, we hide our true selves before him; we shrink back in fear and wish him a speedy departure and feel relieved when he leaves us. Sugar is friendly to

the tongue, and so the tongue will expand at its very sight and receive it with all eagerness, as if a friend has come after a long absence; and through the experience is revealed the real nature of the Self, which is ever-blissful. But the tongue gets contracted and wants to reject the quinine, as if an unfriendly man has come. Thus at that time, the false self, which is never blissful, comes out, and the man feels miserable.

We have seen before that the real man is Sachchidananda or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. If so, whence come all sorts of miseries to him? There is no trace of misery in his true nature. It comes from outside his nature. It comes from something which is unfriendly to him. He is spirit, and out of spirit comes bliss. That which is not spirit, is matter; so out of matter come all miseries. Hence this is the conclusion—that bliss is to be found only inside ourselves. Try to realise it, if you want to get rid of all fear. The Upanishad also tells the same thing: "The highest bliss, Brahmananda, is beyond the reach of word and mind. He who realises it does not fear any more." Realise your true self and be free for ever—free from the hand of ignorance, free from all miseries, free from all sorts of fears, even free from the fear of death.

Mind has a natural tendency to go outside in search after happiness and knowledge. So it is in constant touch with the world. But the world is inadequate to help you realise that infinite bliss: for it is beyond the province of mind even. You have, therefore, to transcend the mind in order to realise Brahmananda. You must not allow the mind to lord

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over you; you must bring it under your perfect control. The path lies over the subjugated mind, and when this path was pointed out to Arjuna, that noble and heroic prince had to confess his weakness and say, "Mind is restless, unruly, strong, difficult to manage. I think it is as difficult to control as the wind." In reply to this complaint, Sri Krishna said, "That the mind is uncontrollable and restless, is beyond all doubt. But by practice and by renunciation of sensual enjoyment, you can have mastery over it." So, you see, Sri Krishna did not preach any easier method to realise the highest ideal. "There is no other path leading to salvation," says the Upanishad. You must constantly practise to concentrate your mind. Never give it up in despair. The more you will be able to minimise your attachment for sensual enjoyments, the more it will be possible for you to concentrate your mind. As it is impossible to fill up a leaky jar with water even if you keep it under a water pipe for hours and hours together, so it is impossible to control the mind if you allow it to escape every now and then through the openings of your senses. If you allow your mind to drink unduly of the liquor of sensual enjoyments, how can you ever expect to make it calm and sober?

Once a great teacher taught his disciples in this wise: How can a bad world come into existence out of God who is absolutely good? What you regard as bad is not really so; only you do not know the use of it. The knife is not a bad thing; but if you hold it on the wrong side, you will cut your fingers, as babies do. We are apt to think that lust, anger, greed, the idea of 'my' and 'mine', pride and jealousy are

enemies of man. They are not so, if we know how to use them. Instead of directing these so-called evil propensities towards the ephemeral things of the world, direct them towards God, and you will achieve the greatest victory by realising Him, with the help of one of these. When any one of these ardent passions, directed towards God, is all paramount in your mind, all other propensities absolutely disappear from it, and nothing but God remains there. If one loves God intensely, nothing but God can ever be there in one's mind. He who is extremely angry with God must have him always in his mind, as it was the case with Sisupala. He who is intensely greedy for food, let him taste the nectar of wisdom—the food by taking which he will hunger no more. If the idea of 'my' and 'mine' is the cause of your bondage here, regard God as your own, and thus be free from bondage once for all. Be truly proud that you are the son of God, and then you will be able to exalt yourself far above all the potentates of the world, nay, even above all the celestial beings who are not fully free from, and are still partially slaves to, the enjoyments of the senses.

You know the infinitely loving nature of God. He is infinitely kind towards all His children. He loves all equally. There is no partiality in His love; for infinite love cannot be divided. He is always ready to help every one who wants His help. Sanaka, Narada, Suka, Prahlada, Dhruva, etc., are as much His children as you are. They have been able to realise God. Why should you also not be able to realise Him? They were able to conquer their minds. Why should you also not be able to do the same? This sort of

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jealousy or emulation is not bad; rather it helps you to attain salvation. Valmiki was a highwayman, and how could he subjugate his mind? Are you not far better than Valmiki before he came to be a sage? We have seen that the highest ideal can be realised by conquering the out-going mind, and that can be effected very easily when you clearly understand the littleness of sensual enjoyments and the infinite nature of spiritual bliss. Then it will not be difficult for your ever-ambitious mind to give up the little and aspire for the great—the infinite Lord of the whole Universe, the Abode of all life, all wisdom and all blissfulness. Then alone will all your struggles end, for then alone will all your ideals be realised. Thus we find that even the Vedas are to be renounced and the Vedanta is to be taken up by those who want to save themselves from all limitations. That is why Sri Krishna finds fault with the Vedas and teaches Arjuna accordingly: "The Vedas deal with the three limited forms of matter, but you, Arjuna, should go beyond all limitations." Indeed the threefold manifestations of matter, the calm and transparent (Sattvika), the ever-active and bound (Rajasika), and the opaque and inert (Tamasika) are all limited, and hence he who wants to go beyond all limitations must give up the teachings of that science which teaches how to deal with persons, places or things which are limited.

Thus we have seen that renunciation is the natural tendency of all living beings throughout the Universe. The mind of every individual is ever-ambitious. It is ignorance that confines a man to pleasures that are limited, making him regard them as the highest. But in the daylight of wisdom, when

the darkness of ignorance entirely disappears, the man is to know the finite as finite and the infinite as infinite. Such a man can never remain tied to the finite; he will naturally renounce the little in order to realise the vast and infinite life, wisdom and bliss. Man is a lover of beauty and so he will naturally love God who is infinitely beautiful. He is a lover of power, and who is more powerful than God? Thus when man knows God to be the highest, the best, the most beautiful, the most powerful, the wisest, the most loving, the most nearly related—more than father, mother, wife, children, relatives, friends, etc.,—it is but natural for him to renounce everything for the sake of the Lord. And it is also a fact that wherever there is any conscious movement either in the animal or in the vegetable kingdom, it is a struggle to realise the highest ideal of eternal life, infinite wisdom and absolute bliss, or in other words Sachchidananda or God, and until that is realised, this struggle will be going on. Sometimes a man may imagine himself to be contented and peaceful, but he mistakes laziness for contentment and peacefulness. Perfect peace and bliss can only be had in God, who is always ready to accept you as His own child when you recognise in Him your true Father.

III

REGIONS, HIGHER AND LOWER

HIGH above us, there is the zenith which we regard as the highest point in the heaven, and down below us there is the nadir which we regard as the lowermost point. But what we regard as zenith, the antipodes regard as nadir, i.e., what we regard as the highest point in space, the Americans regard as the lowest. So we find that there is no point in space which can be definitely named as the highest or the lowest. But is there any point which humanity, as a whole, may regard as the lowest? If so, what is that point? We say it must be the centre of the earth, as it is regarded to be such by all humanity. Any point other than the centre is more distant from the one, and less distant from the other side of the globe; and so, although every point in it is in constant motion on account of its ceaseless revolution round the sun, as regards humanity we may regard the centre to be a fixed point equidistant from all the points on the surface of the earth. We are more concerned with humanity than with any other thing in this Universe, as in the welfare and progress of humanity, our own welfare and progress are ensured. Thus the proper study for man is man himself. After we have found out a fixed point here, the other points are not hard to find. A point that is more distant from it than another should be regarded as higher than it. This lowermost point, the centre of the earth, is also the centre of earthly attraction or gravitation. Every

particle of the earth gravitates or tends towards it. This unseen and irresistible force, seated there, unceasingly exerts its powers on all sides and keeps everything in its place. Every dull, dead material body on the surface of the globe has a tendency to go or fall towards it, and thus man, who is neither a soul nor a dead body but a combination of these two, has also a tendency to go or fall towards it, and he can only keep his body from falling down by means of the opposite force of self-exertion or soul-force. Whenever this soul-force in him is overpowered by the earth-force, as when he has an irresistible desire to sleep or when he has fallen a victim to any kind of impairing disease, he cannot hold erect his body, which, therefore, falls down either on a bed or on the bare ground. Let us call this force of gravitation or earth-force as material force, and the soul force as spiritual force.

The colour of matter at rest is like darkness. If it is a fact that rest is the natural state of a living being and restlessness the unnatural state—for a thing is restless only to find rest,—then we can consider matter also to be in its natural condition when it is at rest, and in its unnatural condition when it is in high motion. We learn from almost all the scriptures of the world that before creation there was darkness everywhere. The undisturbed and slumbering particles of matter were perfectly resting, as it were, at the time, after having gone through the arduous process of a previous creation or manifestation. When the all-powerful will of the Lord brought about disturbance amongst them, heat and light came into existence on account of the very high motion thus produced, and out of the all-devouring darkness of ignorance the light of

Knowledge came forth illumining a portion of the limitless void. The light that came out of darkness following the all-powerful will of the Lord cannot be dull, dead and unconscious, as it came into existence out of the conscious will. And as the cause always enters into the effect, it was the light of knowledge—the conscious and living light. Thus we see that matter, darkness, ignorance, weakness and misery, are inseparably connected with one another, just as spirit, light, knowledge, power and bliss are in turn connected.

The whole earth rotates round its centre. But the centre having no such rotatory motion, may be regarded as fixed and motionless in respect to humanity, although it has its orbital motion in respect of the universe. Light may paint the surface of every material body with various colours, as violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red, but behind the surface, every material body is perfectly dark in the case of the opaque, and partially in the case of the transparent and translucent bodies. Hence, the colour of matter at rest being dark, the central portion of the earth, which has the least motion in it, must be in utter darkness or Tamas.

We have already seen that man is a combination of matter and spirit. When matter preponderates in him, darkness, ignorance, weakness and misery naturally mark him as their own; his tendencies become Tamasika or materialistic. He almost entirely forgets his spiritual nature, and identifies himself with his body. All his enjoyments come to him only through his body. With the disturbance of his body, he feels disturbed, and when it is at rest, he feels himself at rest. In fact he worships no other God than his body.

With the body he feels himself to have been born, with its life he feels himself to live, and with its death he expects to die or be no more. He loves whatever is material and formful, and does not even believe in the existence of what is immaterial, formless or spiritual. He regards his soul to be one of the various manifestations of matter. Just as out of darkness light comes, similarly out of unconscious matter, conscious soul comes into existence. Hence he dotes upon all earthly enjoyments and regards the world as the only reality, and this life to be his all in all. He, therefore, wants to enjoy it at any cost as long as he is allowed to have it. He loves his father, mother, wife, children relatives, friends and neighbours, because they make him happy. All his hopes, aspirations and ambitions are confined to this world and this life alone. Laziness and sleep being his two ideals, he does not want to earn his bread by honest labour, and hence turns out to be a thief. Being absolutely selfish, he perpetrates all sorts of evil deeds to satisfy his passions, turns out to be a cut-throat and a villain, and thus leads a very miserable life. Like an owl he loves darkness, and hence, after his death, he is taken to the abode of darkness, otherwise known as hell, situated in a portion of the region round the centre of the earth, the Patalaloka, to suffer all sorts of miseries, till he is properly punished for all his past misdeeds, when he is again born in this world. However Tamasika a man may be, his inner nature being blissful, he cannot like misery; and so, he gradually hates that sort of life which brings misery to him. When he finds that weakness, the offspring of ignorance, makes him depend upon everything and reduces him to misery, he

wants to be independent. He begins to rebel against Nature around, which refuses to give him all that will make him happy. Thus, by constant struggle, he becomes stronger and stronger. His old Tamasika or lazy nature, he gives up. The spirit in him tries to assert itself and does not want to be subservient to matter. A regular fight goes on between the spiritual and the material in him, which goes by the name of activity. He likes to earn his bread by honest labour and hates to be mean and cringing. He wages an incessant war against ignorance, knowing that knowledge is power. The mysterious world is before him. He wants to unravel its mystery. He wants to be happy and is able to make himself so by forcing Nature to yield him whatever he wants. This partial success in his warfare with Nature makes him very hopeful of a complete victory over her in the future, and he struggles on right manfully. He loves to live and regards his life here as all in all. Earthly enjoyments, honours and glories become the ideals of his life, and thus he identifies himself with his body. His materialistic tendency remains intact. He becomes Rajasika or passionately attached to worldly enjoyments, and as such begins to be always active to get them. He has no leisure to put to himself such questions as, "Who am I? Am I one with my body? Am I to live after death?"

But when by constant activity and labour he is able to earn enough money to make himself perfectly comfortable, when he no longer feels the pinchings of want, and when he can afford to give up labour and enjoy rest, his constantly active mind will not remain satisfied with the enjoyments of the flesh, and the

question will naturally come to him. "Who am I? Am I one with my body? If I am one with it, I shall have to die; but I do not want to die. How, then, am I to live for ever? How can I avoid death? How can I make myself absolutely free from fear of death and various miseries?" and so on. He has now got leisure enough to think upon such problems, and as a result of his constant cogitation, he ultimately finds out their solutions, helped by the scriptures. He has now become Sattvika. He does not like to remain in darkness any more. He wants light, more light, and hence nothing but the higher regions which are ever illumined with the lights of myriads of heavenly bodies, can ever satisfy him. He does not like to live on earth where light and darkness are divided in the course of a year. The little pleasures of the flesh do not satisfy him any more. He wants more substantial, more permanent sorts of pleasures. His ideas get more and more expanded. He finds that he has no home on the earth, and so he longs to go to the higher regions where the heavens are located, whither he is taken up at last by his natural tendencies.

The sages of ancient India have divided the lower regions into seven spheres, the lowermost being Patala where living beings that love darkness, such as Daityas, Danavas, Nagas, etc., like to dwell. These are Tamasikas by nature. The surface of the earth is the abode of humanity, where light and darkness, spirit and matter, knowledge and ignorance are incessantly fighting against one another, and hence it is more like a battlefield than like a dwelling-house. Men are generally Rajasika in their nature. Above the surface of the earth and below the heavens, the

mid-air is peopled by Siddhas, Charanas, Vidyadharas, Gandharvas and other beings. This is called Bhuvārloka, the abode of the demigods. Svargaloka, the abode of the gods who are Sattvika in nature, is situated not on this side of the heavens where the stars, the sun, the planets and the satellites are situated, but on the other side of it, beyond the ken of the mortals. There are five heavens one above the other, the lowermost of which is ruled by Indra and inhabited by the gods. When a man finds the earth to be too little and inadequate for him, he propitiates the gods by means of Yajnas or sacrifices; they, in their turn, take him to heaven after his death, having showered upon him many blessings during his earthly life. When the desire for expansion grows strong, he feels the inadequacy of the sensual pleasures to be found in the lowermost heaven. Having thus outgrown it, he is lifted up to higher heavens, where sages who have conquered their senses live. Thus he is gradually lifted up to Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka; the more he wants to shake off ignorance, the more he wants to expand himself. Coming to know the impermanency even of Satyaloka, he wants to realise that which is permanent, changeless and eternally peaceful and blissful. So at last he renounces that Loka also, and thus saves himself from repeated births and deaths, and attains final liberation. He rests perpetually in the infinitely blissful presence of the Lord of the Universe—the one omnipotent and omniscient Being, the abode of all bliss—knowing Him to be the Soul of his soul, nay the one Soul of all souls. Thus gradually man evolves from Tamasika condition, till he realises

perfection. This process is called Kramamukti or salvation by evolution. The highest region, that is, Satyaloka or Brahmaloaka, is ruled over by Brahma the creator of the Universe. Although he is ever-active and is thus Rajasika in nature, still Rajas does not bind him; for he, the first born child of God, was also His first student. From Him he first learnt that the individual soul is not the worker but is an instrument in His hand. He was the first to understand his inactive nature amidst all his activities, just as a witness sees another working, himself doing nothing. "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction," says Sri Krishna, "such a man of great mental concentration is qualified to do all works." The first-created being was thus able to be the creator of the Universe. Just as a swan has the power to separate milk from water, Brahma had the power to separate truth from falsehood; therefore he is called Paramahansa or the all-knowing swan. Being the first Paramahansa, he is the leader of all future Paramahansas, and along with them he has found a safe abode in Brahmaloaka. In that land of highest intellectual bliss, amidst all sorts of stupendous activities, Brahma is ever peaceful and calm. When, during the time of universal destruction, even his abode gets destroyed, the calm and peaceful lord of Brahmaloaka remains beyond the reach of all-destroying time, as peaceful and calm as ever, absorbed in his own Supreme Self, Narayana, who eternally rests on Ananta or infinity.

But those souls, who do not want to have the least connection with any sort of activity whatever, who want to realise their own infinite nature, do not:

like to remain even in Brahmaloaka, as that, too, is a place which is not permanent and not free from activities. Such souls merge their individualities in the universal soul of the Supreme Lord, Narayana, and become one with Him, in the bond of Love. That is why Sri Krishna teaches Arjuna, "All the Lokas, beginning from the highest Brahmaloaka, come again and again, but when a man comes to Me, he will have no rebirth any more." So, finding out our lowermost point to be the centre of the earth, we at last find out the lowest condition of the soul as well as its highest. We have also seen that in order to be unconditioned and liberated from repeated births and deaths, the soul will have to go where there is no creation.

A man going beyond creation, directly comes to the creator, as where there is no creation, there must be He who creates. Many people are apt to think that this idea of heaven and hell is merely mythological. Heaven and hell have no real existence. By heaven, we always understand a blessed condition, and by hell, a miserable condition. These are only localised in two imaginary places, which go by the names of heaven and hell; and to support their view they adduce this reason. Let us take for granted the existence of heaven and hell. When I am sleeping, suppose two angels take me up to heaven, and there in that sleeping condition, make me live for years and years together. There also angels come and worship me while I am sleeping. After the lapse of that long period in the same state of sleep, I am brought back here to my old place on earth and made to wake up. Although I have been living in heaven for so many years, I have no idea of it after waking. Why? I was

in heaven, and still I was not in it; for I was not conscious at the time. Where then does heaven actually exist? It exists in my consciousness or in me. In the same manner, where does hell exist? Let us see. Suppose again I am sleeping and two men from hell come out and take me to hell, and there I am punished in many terrible ways while I am sleeping. After some time I am brought back to my old place. Although I have undergone so many punishments in hell, still I am not able to recall them; for I was not conscious at the time. Therefore punishments or miseries must be in my consciousness or must be felt by myself. Hence heaven and hell exist only in myself and nowhere else.

The argument is all right, as long as man identifies himself with his consciousness. Does he ever do so? Let us see. This consciousness, in which all knowledge exists and but for which no knowledge can ever be, is the same as Brahman or Pure Consciousness in which the whole creation exists and but for which creation can have no existence. Brahman, being purely conscious, knows everything about the entire creation which exists only in It. Human consciousness, confined within the limitations of body and mind, can only illumine their inside and has no power to go beyond, just as a lamp inside a room only illumines the room and not outside it. When any one can get rid of these limitations, he becomes unconfined and all-pervading, the same as Brahman, the Omniscient One. Sruti says, "He who knows Brahman, the purely conscious Being, becomes one with It." When a man can identify himself with his consciousness, he becomes a purely conscious being, which is

the same as Brahman. This is the most difficult of all achievements. None in the entire creation can fully get rid of the limitations of body and mind. That is why Sri Krishna says: "There is not a single soul in the world of mortals, nay, there is not a single god in the world of gods, who is free from the three ties of matter or Prakriti." Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "You cannot give a durable shape to gold without mixing it with some baser metal to form an alloy. Similarly, the Infinite Soul is naturally so formless that if you want to give a form to it, you have to make an alloy of it with matter." So long as this material impurity is there, the limitless soul will have to regard itself as limited. The moment this impurity is got rid of, the soul finds out its limitless nature and becomes free. So, before a man gains salvation, it is not possible for him to identify himself with his consciousness; he is bound to regard himself as formful, occupying a certain place in the Universe. To such a man, therefore, the whole creation exists with its infernal, intermediate and celestial quarters, with all their sufferings and enjoyments. It is natural for such a man to believe in the higher and the lower regions and regard the earth as a stationary body round which all the heavenly bodies are moving. To him, therefore, all the various spheres of existence (Lokas) that we have just now described must exist, as he would look at everything in relation to himself, not as Pure Consciousness but as a formful being. Does any man regard his form as imaginary and false? Rather he ignores, not unoften, the very existence of his soul as distinct and separate from his body. He firmly believes himself to be a Mr. So-and-So, a Hindu

or a Christian, a native of this country or that, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, tall or short, dark or fair and so on. He entertains no doubt as to his being all these. Thus it is impossible for him to give up the idea that he is formful and limited, and even if he understands himself to be eternal, dwelling for a short period of time in his present body,—the idea that he was living in various bodies before, and is going to live in many bodies hereafter to satisfy his various and ever-rising desires, cannot but be an undeniable fact to him. And when he associates misery with darkness and happiness with light, and when he knows the abode of darkness to be in the nethermost regions and sees that light or happiness comes from the highermost regions, he naturally aspires to go to the higher regions to be happy, as nothing else but happiness is what he wants. Thus the eternal yet limited souls must rise up continually to the higher regions, in order that they may be more and more happy. For such souls only, the universe with its higher and lower regions exists. Who can question the reality of the Universe? Certainly not he who regards himself as limited in form, though he may know himself to be eternal in being.

Now let us view the subject from the standpoint of the Absolute. No point can be definite or fixed in this indefinite space. The centre of the earth may be regarded as the fixed point only in relation to humanity. Whoever has got the least knowledge of astronomy can understand that the centre of the earth is not a fixed point. So, since there is no definite point in this Universe, we cannot say which is high and which is low. Still the ideas are there; how are

we to account for them? In answer to this question, we say that we get these ideas of higher and lower regions from our own body. We call that high which is towards the direction of our head. We call that low, which is towards the direction of our feet. This, the great seers of ancient India found out. Since apart from the body a man cannot have any conception of above and below, higher and lower regions are to be sought inside the body and not outside it. Head and heart, therefore, should be regarded as higher regions; navel and pelvic regions should be regarded as lower. And if misery is to be found in the lower and bliss in the higher regions of the macrocosm, the same must be the case with the microcosm. The ancient seers not only found out man to be the epitome of the whole Universe, but came to know him to be the very root of it. Thus they gave up their search after wisdom in the Universe outside and concentrated all their energies to search it out in themselves, inside their own bodies,—not with the gross, material knife of the dissection room but with the search-light of their subtle, clear and unbiased mind. And with what result? The discovery of the highest truth, as eternal life, infinite bliss, and all knowledge. In the body proper, consisting of the head and the trunk, they discovered six centres (Chakras), the six seats of the mind. The lowermost centre they called the Muladhara, the basis of all the other centres. Then above, in respective order, there are Svadhishtana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddha and Ajna. They found out that as long as the mind remains confined to the three lowermost centres occupying the pelvic regions and the navel, it undergoes all

sorts of miseries which make it very restless. Hell was thus localised in the two pelvic centres, Muladhara and Svadhishtana, and earth was localised in Manipura, the third centre situated near the region of the navel. Almost all the men of the world along with all the lower animals remain confined in these three lowermost centres. So it is said that 'eating, sleeping, fear and sexual enjoyment, we have in common along with the lower animals'. Is it not a fact that most of us lead this sort of animal life? We are apt to call men wise if they have read many books and understood them intellectually, even though they never care to follow the teachings and principles inculcated therein, but direct the energies of their minds to mean and selfish ends like any ordinary mortal, full of animal propensities. Sri Ramakrishna used to compare such people with vultures that soar very high, but always direct their eyes downwards in search of rotten carcasses of animals. The truly wise have thus been defined by Bhagavan Sri Krishna: "They should be regarded as wise who can regard a scholarly and humble Brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a Chandala as one and the same (seeing the same Self in all)." Sruti also teaches us, "This Self can never be realised either by the man who has the power to discuss upon philosophical subjects perfectly well, or by him who has an exceptional genius to call his own, or by one who has studied many scriptures. He alone is qualified to realise Him, who exclusively longs for Him and nothing else. Before him alone this Self reveals his own true nature." Look at a man who is starving for some days; he longs for nothing but food. When one has that sort of longing for God,

He shows Himself to him. Such an example is not far to seek. You have all heard the name of our great Master Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. He hardly knew to read and write. But because the one longing of his life was to realise God he was blessed with the vision of the Lord, and his soul got illumined with so much wisdom that nowadays he is regarded as a true guide to humanity all over the world. What is there in reading many books and learning everything by rote like a parrot ?

Almost all our modern scholars study many books, more for earning money than for getting true wisdom. Moreover, the books which they read, teach them with pompous parade, agnosticism. What sort of wisdom can we expect out of such studies ? Merely cramming the mind with some facts about the phenomenal Universe which, looked upon as an objective reality, will always remain inexplicable, that can never bring peace and consolation to any soul that wants illumination of true knowledge. Thus the man of modern education is hopelessly thrown into the quagmire of doubts and dangers from which he can never expect to extricate himself. In his search after truth, he is everywhere checked by the irresistible mandate from the unknown, "Thus far shalt thou go and no further." How can his limited ego ever expect to fathom the Limitless ? Getting blinded by a false pride, the offspring of his ego, he loses all faith in the existence of the Lord of the Universe and thus leads an irresponsible, graceless and miserable sort of life which more befits an animal than a rational man. Fully identifying himself with his body, he laughs at the very idea of renouncing the enjoyments of the flesh,

and has no mind to go beyond the three lower centres of his body, the genetalia, the rectum and the navel. My experience is that faith is to be found more in the illiterate people than in the learned scholars now-a-days. These three lower centres in the body make us seize with greed the enjoyments of the flesh. So long as man remains confined in these centres, he becomes very selfish and blind to the requirements of others. And because selfishness is the common characteristic of the lower animals, such a man does not out-grow his animal nature.

He who is able to rise beyond selfishness, who has the power to feel for others, who has a philanthropic turn of mind and has the milk of human kindness in him in profusion, can only raise himself up to the fourth centre, the Anahata localised in the region of his heart. The sufferings of others make him more miserable than his own sufferings. Such a man is called a man of great charity and generosity. Every one looks upon him with reverence and regards him as an extraordinary man. He is regarded as a god on earth. He never lives for himself. The animal propensities have completely left him. The Divinity in him has come forth, and his face shines like that of a god. He sees God in every man and woman of the world, and like an humble devotee, serves each and every one of them. His love does not remain confined to humanity only ; he loves and serves even the lower animals, seeing the same God in them. Thus he goes on for some time till, by serving the children of God, his love towards Him increases and he comes to know His greatness more and more. When the knowledge of the infinite wisdom, power and love of God fully

grows in him, he comes to know the insignificant nature and littleness of his own self which ultimately wanes away like the moon before the rising sun; and he then puts this question to himself, "Does not the whole world belong to the all-powerful and all-merciful Lord of the Universe? Does He not know far better than myself to protect His children? Are not all His ways absolutely right? Who am I to correct and rectify Him? Does He require my help, because He, the all-powerful, cannot manage His own affairs Himself? Why are men miserable? Has God made them so? Man reaps the fruit of his past actions. That is why the blind, the lame, etc., suffer and get punished, because they did not behave properly in their previous lives. I should not be foolish again to interfere with His affairs; for He, the Lord of infinite love, knows far better than myself or any one how to treat His own children kindly. My interference may only bring about a slight disturbance in the eternally unbroken harmony of His all-providing method in managing and governing His own creation.¹ My primary duty, therefore, is to realise Him so that I may be blessed forever, and then if I am made to work, all my actions will be in entire harmony with His will and not till then. So I will have to make Him my own first, all else must come afterwards."

When you go to worship Sri Ranganatha Swami of Srirangam, you find many beggars coming to you

¹ This attitude of the true spiritual man should never be confused with the callousness of the selfish man towards the sufferings of his fellow-creatures. The latter also may put forward all these arguments to hide his selfishness, but they have no force when advanced by him, in as far as they are not backed up with that higher faith of the truly spiritual man.

for alms. If you go on distributing money or food to them, the more you do so, the more beggars will be coming to you; and there will be no end of them. While you are thus engaged, the temple gate has been shut and you come back home without seeing the Lord. Therefore, you should worship the Lord first and then come back to distribute alms to the poor.

Thus the man of charity gives up all his philanthropic works as he detects his blind ego behind all his actions. He dives deeper and deeper within himself in search of the Lord of infinite love, and never stops till he realises Him in the region of his heart. What indescribable bliss comes to him when his soul comes in direct communion with God! He finds his true father, true mother, true friend and true lover in Him, and he can never turn his eyes away from Him. He has found out his true home at last. His mind cannot think upon anything else at the time, his mouth cannot talk of anything else than of his Beloved. He has gone up to the fifth centre, the Visuddhachakra, or the centre of absolute purity.

A man must be absolutely pure to go there. What is purity? It means 'only-ness' or singleness. When a man's mind is occupied by the one idea of God, when he can only talk about Him and nothing else, he is said to be absolutely pure. God remains eternally bound to him, as the same Lord in His incarnation as Sri Krishna has expressed himself: "Those people who give up all other thoughts and meditate upon Me with exclusive devotion, I serve such men of unbroken meditation by earning and laying by for them." When a man can make himself thus pure, then only he is qualified to rise up from the fourth to the fifth centre.

When once he goes to this centre, he has no inclination to come down, and if he is inclined to come down at all, he only descends to the fourth centre. So he has to rise still higher and higher till at last he comes to the sixth centre, the Ajnachakra. He who rises up to this sixth Chakra sees God directly before him and gets so much merged in the ocean of love towards his most beloved One, that unless his previous Karma that has already begun to bear fruit drags him down, or unless he has previously determined to come down, he is never inclined to descend from that highest eminence. The absolute and all-cementing Love draws him nearer and nearer to Infinity, till after twenty-one days his limited self becomes unified with the Limitless; his individuality loses itself in the universal being of the Lord, and becomes one with It. As long as he remains in this sixth centre, he does not commune with Him mentally, nor has he the power to speak of Him to anyone. He sees Him directly, and infinitely enjoys the beatific vision. If his fruit-bearing (Prarabdha) Karma or his previous determination makes him descend even from that exalted height, he can only come down as far as the fourth centre. (Whomsoever he commands at that time, shall have to obey, may it be a man or an angel. Hence the sixth centre is called Ajnachakra or the centre of commandment.) To elucidate this let me narrate to you a parable of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

Four friends once determined to search out the Land of Bliss, and they were searching for it not for one life but for several lives, till at last in one of their life-long searches they came across a very high wall. It checked their onward course, and so they deter-

mined to scale it. Accordingly, they secured a considerable number of strong iron-spikes, which they began to drive fast partially into the wall, one above the other. Then one of them, placing his foot in the projected parts of the nails, began to ascend with the determination to come down after seeing what was behind the wall. But when he got up in this way, he saw something inside, which made him laugh in ecstasy, and not caring to come down to his friends, he jumped in. The second man of the party now went up by the same path with the same determination, and shared the same fate with the first man. The third also never fared better. The fourth, thus left alone, now went up and saw to his great satisfaction, the Land of Bliss for which he has been toiling for so many lives. He also had a great desire to jump in like his other comrades, but then he remembered the almost hopeless plight of many people searching for the same place, who, being unable to find it, were on the point of giving up the search in despair. Remembering them, he resisted the temptation of falling in, and slowly came down to carry this good news to the millions that were toiling for the same end.

From the above parable we learn that very few can resist the irresistible desire to be absorbed in the Lord, the Abode of Bliss. He who can come down from the glorious height is called an Incarnation of God. All great men of the world who are regarded as Incarnations of God by different nations, are men of the above description. They never care for their own enjoyment. Such great souls alone are qualified to do good to the world. They do not work out of necessity or compulsion like the ordinary man of the world.

They work out of unselfish love for humanity; that is why the infinite and unmanifested Lord of the whole Universe is more appreciated, worshipped and loved in these manifested aspects of Him. Men have erected countless temples, shrines, pagodas and churches in honour of these God-men, to whom they will have to remain eternally indebted for the immeasurable good they have done, undergoing all sorts of miseries inflicted upon them by those very ungrateful people for whose good alone they lived, laboured and died.

After having had a clear conception of the higher and lower regions in both their outer and inner aspects, the seers of old were able to achieve the grandest victory over death, ignorance and misery, by realising the Sachchidananda—Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute.

By God we mean these three highest perfections, eternal Existence, infinite Knowledge and undying Bliss. Your struggles will never come to an end for lives and lives together, until you realise these. The seers of old were able to know their infinite Self by the irresistible strength of their will; you also can succeed in the same manner if you have as strong a will as they had. What has been done once, may be done several times over.

Says the Sruti, "If you know the highest truth in this life then you shall really live. But if in this life you do not know it, great shall be the number of deaths you shall have to fall a prey to." May the grace of the Lord enable you to realise the Truth even in this life!

IV

THE LOCUS OF THE SOUL

BEFORE we attempt to find out the locus of the soul, it is desirable to know something about it. What do we understand by the word 'soul'? Many are apt to confound it with man. Man has a name and a form, a caste and a creed, a father and a mother, while the soul has no such thing. Man lives in the world, while the soul lives in man or in any other living organism, whether animal, celestial or infernal. Man has a birth and a death, but soul takes countless births and dies as many times. Hence man cannot be the soul.

If I ask any man, "Who are you?"—he will spontaneously say, "My name is such and such; I am the son of Mr. so-and-so, etc." Such an answer clearly shows that the first personal pronoun 'I' or the 'ego' is identical with man, and not with soul. It rises with man and sets with him. Like man, it is bounded on both sides by birth and death.

But there seems to be an apparent contradiction to what we have just now said regarding the ego in the following statement of Sri Krishna: "But it is not a fact that myself, yourself, and all these kings never existed before this life, and that all of us are not going to exist hereafter." Here the ego has been made to overlap the boundary lines of birth and death. But we must remember that the speaker, in this case, is not a man but God, and since God is infinite, His body,

mind, ego, soul and self must be infinite. Because there cannot be more than one infinity, God's body, mind, ego, soul and self are all one. Later on we find Him distinguishing His ego from that of His friend. "Many births have elapsed of Myself as well as of yourself, O Arjuna; I know them all, but you know them not." Here Sri Krishna puts the impassable barriers of birth and death, between which lie the ego of man. Thus the ego is identical with man and not with soul.

In order to correct Arjuna's wrong notion about the soul that dwells in the body, Sri Krishna has described its nature in these glowing words. And in describing it we find Him using the masculine gender instead of neuter, as many sages before Him have done in the Upanishads: "As a man casts away his old and useless clothes, and replaces them with new ones, so the soul that dwells in man casts away his old and useless bodies and takes others that are new. Him, the weapons do not cut, the fire does not burn, the water does not wet, and the wind does not dry. He cannot be cut, cannot be burnt, cannot be wet, and cannot be dried. He is ever-existing, all-pervading, changeless, motionless, ever-living, unmanifested, inconceivable, and always the same. This is how the sages describe Him."

So from the scriptures we learn that the soul that dwells in man is not finite like him. It has been described as all-pervading i.e., infinite; changeless i.e., absolutely simple and not compound in its nature; ever-living, i.e., ever-conscious or never unconscious; hence all-knowing, being infinitely conscious; and always the same, i.e., perfectly satisfied, having no

want to make it restless or miserable. Thus we find it to be eternally blissful and all-knowing. But the moment we look towards man, we find him to be exactly the reverse of it. The soul, which makes the existence of man possible, which shines through his ego and mind, and thus brings them into existence, and, but for which the organs of sense and activity could not be what they are—in fact which makes up the whole of man, and which is eternally blissful and all-knowing as we have just now learned from the scriptures—is not to be found in its true colour in man at all; on the other hand, we find it to be entirely misrepresented by him. How can a man conscious only of his physical self ever identify himself with such an infinite soul? In so doing, he will have to deny the testimony of all his senses, he will have to go against all observations and experiments, and very few people there are nowadays, who will be ready to sacrifice these undeniable evidences at the altar of the scriptures. So naturally the question comes: Is there no rational proof to contradict the verdict of the senses, and uphold the affirmations of the scriptures, regarding not only the true nature of the soul, but the very existence of it? In answer to this question, we say that the scriptures never contradict reason. It is a fact that the power of reason cannot reach some of the highest flights of the scriptures, where they deal with matters pertaining to the very being of the supreme, secondless and infinite Self, but it has full access to all the mysteries of creation that are not inconceivable by the mind, provided it has an inclination and a will to unravel them. Human mind being limited, it can only grapple with objects and ideas that

are limited; but it is also a fact that with the help of the limited, we can reach the Limitless. Just as with the help of a river limited between its two banks, we can reach the limitless ocean, in the same manner, with the help of the individual soul manifested as man, we can reach the Infinite Soul, described in the scriptures. Let us see how we can do that.

Man passes through three conditions of waking, dream and sleep in twenty-four hours; in his waking condition he is conscious of the world around him, of events that happened, as well as of what are going to happen, i.e., he is conscious of the past, the present and the future, and whatever takes place or comes to be perceived or conceived by him in these three manifestations of time. So in his waking conditions he is conscious of various phenomena both physical and mental.

Consciousness is that illumination or light in man which makes him know the countless things and ideas which make up his outer and inner world, and just as by one light many objects are rendered visible, so by one consciousness many objects and ideas are rendered knowable. But for that one consciousness nothing can be known. Just as darkness causes everything to be invisible, so unconsciousness makes everything unknowable. Thus all knowledge is based upon one consciousness, just as all radii are based upon one centre. Every man has a natural hankering for knowing more and more, and therefore whenever he acquires fresh knowledge, he feels himself greatly satisfied. Since knowledge is possible only in consciousness, just as vision is possible only in light, the satisfaction

which comes after the acquirement of fresh knowledge is possible only for consciousness, and hence satisfaction and consciousness always go hand in hand. From this it can be safely deduced that perfect satisfaction comes to a man only when his consciousness is never opposed to, and thus limited by, unconsciousness. Boundless or infinite consciousness is, therefore, inseparably connected with infinite satisfaction or bliss. The all-knowing alone is all-blissful.

Consciousness being distinct and separate only in relation to unconsciousness, it cannot be distinguished from itself, its one distinctive feature in all circumstances being its inseparable connection with blissfulness. As water cannot be distinguished from water, so consciousness cannot be distinguished from consciousness.

When man enters the condition of dream, the dream-world is before him, and he is conscious of all those things that make up that world. His consciousness persists in that condition and is the same as that which exists in his waking condition. But we are apt to think that when he sleeps soundly, he becomes unconscious and that his consciousness, therefore, ceases to exist at the time. Let us examine this state.

It is a fact that memory is always connected with past experiences. Whatever we have seen, touched, tasted, smelt, heard of or known before, we can call back or remember, and not other things; and in order to perceive and know anything, the conscious knower must be there. Whenever we wake up from sound sleep, do we not recall or remember that we have slept very soundly? The conscious knower must have been there to know it, and then only remembrance or

memory is possible. So consciousness persists even in the condition of sound sleep, and it is the same as that which exists in the states of waking and dream. In waking condition, the physical senses, mind, ego and consciousness all live and work together, but in the condition of dream the physical senses fall off and the other three persist, while in the condition of sound sleep, the first three fall off and only consciousness persists. Since the whole of man's life is made up of these three conditions, and since consciousness never ceases to be in all of them during his whole life-time, consciousness runs on ceaselessly, one and the same all throughout, while the physical senses, the mind and the ego have breaks. These three rise and set like the sun, whereas consciousness neither rises nor sets but continues to be in one and the same manner all throughout and never changes. There is an innate belief in the uniformity of Nature's works to be found in every man, which he can never shake off, and which has made the existence of scientific knowledge possible. For instance, if a man dissects one human body and finds it to contain a certain number of bones, arteries, veins, muscles, nerves, etc., he cannot help concluding that all human bodies must contain the same number, and thus he brings into existence the science of anatomy. Believing in the uniformity of Nature's works and examining a certain object in Nature for a few days, we at once deduce all those laws under which it acts. Thus if we examine the nature of consciousness for a few days, months, and even decades, we find it to be changeless, and so we cannot help arriving at the conclusion that its nature is to be one and the same always, i. e., to be changeless; and

this is the only quality of an eternal and infinite being. For if it were non-eternal, then it would have to be changeful, which is not the case, and if it were finite, it would be liable to death, which cannot be, as we have just now seen. Thus consciousness in man is eternal and infinite, or as it is called in the Upanishads, Sat. On account of its being conscious, it is also called Chit.

Man again has an infinite love for his own being; he wants 'to be', or live. He never wants 'not to be', or die. Death is regarded by him as the greatest misery which he, therefore, wants to get rid of at any cost. That is why he wants to get rid of lions, tigers, venomous snakes, all ferocious and destructive animals, and even men, by killing them. He loves that which makes him happy and wants to preserve it. Whatever has the power to make him more and more happy, he loves more and more. Hence that which is the abode of all bliss he cannot but love most, and what is that thing which he loves most? Assuredly he loves himself more than all other things, and that is why Yajnavalkya instructs Maitreyi, his wife, in this way: "Not for the satisfaction of the husband, but for the satisfaction of one's own self, the husband is loved; not for the satisfaction of the wife but for the satisfaction of one's own self, the wife is loved; not for the satisfaction of the sons, but for the satisfaction of one's own self the sons are loved; not for the satisfaction of wealth, but for the satisfaction of one's own self, wealth is loved; not for the satisfaction of the Brahmana, but for the satisfaction of one's own self the Brahmana is loved; not for the satisfaction of the Kshatriya, but for the satisfaction of one's own self,

the Kshatriya is loved; not for the satisfaction of the blissful habitations of souls, but for the satisfaction of one's own self, the blissful habitations of souls are loved; not for the satisfaction of the gods, but for the satisfaction of one's own self, the gods are loved; not for the satisfaction of all the living beings, but for the satisfaction of one's own self, all the living beings are loved; not for the satisfaction of the whole Universe, but for the satisfaction of one's own self, the whole Universe is loved. Therefore, my beloved Maitreyi, one's own self should be rightly known, after it is heard of, well-understood, and profoundly and repeatedly meditated upon; for by hearing about, understanding, deeply meditating upon and then realising, one's own self, all this that is non-self is known." Thus, since man loves himself most of all, his self must be the abode of blissfulness or bliss itself, which in Sanskrit is called Ananda.

So the consciousness in man is Sachchidananda, or eternally all-knowing and all-blissful, and this is what is called Paramatma or Soul of all souls. But who am I? Am I distinct and separate from my consciousness? Is not consciousness my very being? Because unconsciousness overpowers my consciousness during the time of sleep, I do not exist at the time. Hence I and my consciousness are one, identical and if consciousness is eternally all-knowing and all-blissful, why do I not feel myself to be so? In answer to this, we say that the ego indeed is not separate from consciousness, but it is only a portion and not the whole of it, as we have seen already. Consciousness is limitless, but the ego is limited, and as such, its knowledge about itself must be limited. Thus we cannot say that

the ego does not know its true nature; in that case, it could not love itself above all other things, but the fact is, as we have already seen, it loves itself most of all and thereby proves its all-blissful nature. Again we cannot say that it knows its true nature fully; in that case it could not have the least desire for any sensual enjoyment. For how can that which is infinitely blissful ever feel any want of enjoyment? So the ego knows and does not know its true nature simultaneously, just as the father of one of the boys who are chanting a portion of the Vedas in chorus, knows that his son's voice is there in the sound, but does not know to distinguish it from the voices of the other children, which have drowned the voice of his son. Innumerable worldly concerns have been dragging this poor little ego towards themselves so much, that it has no power to come back to its home inside itself, but remains tied to the world outside with innumerable ropes of attachment. It has no time to think of itself even and how then can it ever know its true nature? As it is, it is a perfect misrepresentation of consciousness from which it has its being. Sri Ramakrishna used to illustrate this deplorable condition of the ego, in this way. The little child has got its whole mind to itself, and that is why it is so happy all day long, spends its time in play, and feeling tired, falls asleep. But when it grows up to be a boy or girl, it is sent to school. Then, a quarter of his mind, the boy is forced to give his lessons for fear of being punished for his unmindfulness. When he grows up to be a man and gets married, half of his mind goes to his wife, and when after some time he becomes a father, the remainder of his mind goes to his child, and he has no mind

remaining to be given to God. Thus man cannot help becoming a devotee of the world instead of becoming a devotee of God.

It is apparently absurd, but really true, when I say that God is nearer to you than you are to yourself. Where are you at present? Where your mind is, there you must be. And where is your mind? Scattered all over the world and tied to it so firmly that you deem it almost impossible to bring it back inside yourself. And where is God? He is always there sitting in your heart, as we learn from all ancient sages. So God is always inside, and you are always outside yourself, or in other words, God is nearer to you than you are to yourself.

So, though this ego is an offspring of consciousness, still by its association with the dull, dead, material world, it has imbibed the qualities of matter more than those of its progenitor. That is why it deems itself to be limited and absolutely imperfect in every way. It is a hungry, thirsty, and passionate being, and as such, is bound to be restless and active on account of its passions and appetites.

Many people are apt to confound this ego with Pure Consciousness of the Infinite Self known as Brahman, and in order to save them from committing this egregious and fatal blunder, Sri Sankaracharya very carefully explains the four most famous texts from the four Vedas,—‘I am Brahman,’ ‘Thou art That,’ ‘This Self is Brahman’ and ‘Consciousness is Brahman’. According to Sri Sankara, we should not understand the texts literally, as in that case absurd meanings will come out of them. How can ‘I’, ‘thou’, ‘this self’ and ‘consciousness’, all meaning ego and thus limited,

ever be equal to or same as Brahman, who is infinite? And yet the Vedas declare this ego to be the same as the Infinite Self or Brahman. Then how to explain them? As in the sentence, "This Devadatta is that man," we identify Devadatta with 'that man', meaning a man that we had seen before. Although the latter looked very differently from Devadatta on account of his beard and peculiar dress, which the gentleman before us has not got, yet looking at the sameness of age, colour, height, gait, cut of the face, etc., we cannot help identifying both of them, rejecting the differences that subsist between them. Similarly, rejecting the differences of limitation and limitlessness that exist between the ego and Brahman, and looking at the same conscious nature of both, we are naturally led to identify both of them. Ego, free from all limitations, is the same as Brahman, and so this limitless ego has been thus described: "This ego is not a man, not a god, not a Yaksha, neither a Brahmana nor a Kshatriya, neither a Vaisya nor a Sudra, neither a Brahmachari nor a householder, neither an ascetic nor a Sannyasin, but it is pure self-consciousness" (Sri Sankara). Led away by the false delusion of sensuality, as long as we shall allow this ego to be identified with our nearest and dearest relatives and friends, with body, mind and innumerable desires contained therein, so long it is limited and blind, and it has nothing to do with the Infinite Self. Step by step it will have to rise up from its extremely limited and narrow state to less limited and broader conditions, till at last it becomes unconditioned, unconfined or limitless. As a tributary loses itself in and becomes one with, the river, and as the river loses itself in, and

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Becomes one with, the ocean, so the ego should be made to lose itself in, and become one with, the individual soul which takes bodies after bodies to satisfy its innumerable desires; and this eternal individual soul should, in turn, be made to lose itself in, and become one with the infinite and Universal Soul or Pure Consciousness, eternally all-knowing and all-blissful.

Now we have some idea of the soul that dwells in the body. It is clear that the infinite and Universal Soul can be localised nowhere. In Him all the individual souls, all egos, all minds, all living organisms, nay, the whole Universe exist, and He exists in Himself, as He is one without a second. He is absolute and unrelated, beyond space, time and causation, self-existent and self-conscious, pure and perfect, life itself, and blessedness itself. But what is the locus of the soul that takes body after body in trying to unfold itself?

In the fourth Brahmana of the third Chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, it is stated that in the beginning, before the creation, Self alone existed in the form of a man. Then looking around, He found none but Himself, and finding Himself alone, He got frightened; then He reflected within Himself, "Since there is none besides me, from whom am I to fear?" and then His fear left Him, as fear only comes from another and not from one's own self. This is the absolute, the unrelated and the unconditioned Self who lives in Himself. Then it is stated in the same Brahmana, "He did not like to be alone. He wanted a partner, and then a portion of His man-form transformed itself into a male-female form, half male

and half female. He separated that newly transformed portion of His body from Himself and remained unmanifested. Then husband and wife came into existence out of that separated portion. The husband's body was not whole but half, the wife's body was not whole but half. Both together became full. The husband was the void and the wife made the void full. Yajnavalkya has taught this."

We learn from this how the unrelated appears as related, the unconditioned appears as conditioned, the one appears as two, the whole appears to split itself up into halves, the self-existent unit appears to become two units mutually depending upon each other, the sexless appears as male and female. This is the beginning of creation. The male is the creator and the female is the creation; the male is the unmanifested back-ground and the female is the manifestation of past, present, and future,—is length, breadth and thickness; form, touch, taste, smell and sound; speech, action, locomotion, evacuation and enjoyment; thinking, feeling and willing; creation, preservation and destruction; beginning, middle and end. In fact we cannot imagine creation without a creator, preservation without a preserver, and destruction without a destroyer.

Where does creation exist? She exists in the heart of the creator, as we know that Lakshmi stays in the heart of Narayana. Where does the creator exist? He exists in the Infinite Self or Consciousness that goes by the name of Brahman. Where does Brahman exist? He exists in Himself. He is eternal, all-blissfull and all-knowing. All-bliss and all-knowledge come from Him alone. He has got the monopoly

of them. None else can give bliss and wisdom, and if anyone else has the power to give a little of them he is only the apparent giver, the real giver being Brahman Who uses him as His tool. "Whatever is glorious, charming and sublime," He says in His incarnation as Sri Krishna, "know that a portion of My power has brought into existence." When God manifests Himself through a person, then alone He can make others happy and wise.

If He has got the the monopoly of bliss and wisdom and life, and if I and all men and women have an intense longing for them, and if nothing else can satisfy us, then we will have to go to Him. How to go to Him? Where can we find Him out? Let us see. Horses are to be found in stables and not in nests, i.e., horses are to be searched where horses live and not birds. Milk is to be found in milk and not in water. Salt is to be found in salt alone and not in sugar. So, if Brahman is consciousness, then He can be found only in consciousness and not in unconsciousness. Spirit can be found only in spirit and not in matter

The world around me is material. Whatever is formful is matter, and the world is made up of forms; so it is material. Hence spirit or consciousness cannot be found there. But there are two kinds of forms which make up the world, the animate and the inanimate, the conscious and the unconscious. So consciousness can be found amongst conscious or animated forms which go by the name of animals. And again, amongst animals some are less conscious and some are more. So infinite consciousness should be searched amongst those animals who are most conscious. Such animals go by the name of man:

Amongst men some are less conscious, some are more. So infinite consciousness should be searched amongst men who are most conscious. Such men are the great teachers, the Great Gurus, whom we call the Incarnations of God, Rishis, sages and seers,—like Rāma, Krishna, Siva, Suka, Sanaka, Narada, Vyasa, Vasishtha, Parasara, Valmiki, Buddha, Moses, Christ, Sanakara, Ramanuja, Madhvacharya, Mahomet, Zoroaster, Jina, Confucius and many others. We must sit at the feet of one of such great teachers in order to realise infinite consciousness. Every man is born with such a teacher, for a man calls himself either a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Jaina, a Christian, a Mohammedan, a Zoroastrian, a Confucian, a Judaist and so on. It is always desirable to be guided by one such great teacher. We inherit religious propensities along with many other propensities from our parents and ancestors, and since almost each and every one of us is born with a certain great teacher whom his father and grandfather had inherited from their ancestors, therefore it is but natural for him to love, revere, worship and follow that particular teacher.

Now let us examine in brief the teachings of some of those great teachers. First of all, let us see what the great Indian sages of yore have to teach us. Out of their pure and spotless minds the Upanishads, which are regarded as constituting the heads of all the Vedas, have emanated. So by quoting a few out of many similar passages from some of the Upanishads, we shall know the minds of these great sages.

"He who realises Brahman realises the highest. Therefore it has been said, Brahman is eternal, infinite and all-knowledge. He who knows Him hidden in the

sanctum sanctorum situated in the recess of his heart, he enjoys all that is desirable along with the all-knowing Brahman." (Taittiriya, Brahmanandavalli).

"That effulgent and inconceivable Being is very vast, and at the same time subtler than the subtlest. He is most distant of all the distant things, and at the same time very near; to those who know Him, He is hidden in the recess of the heart" (First Section of the Third Mundaka).

"The inner Self, a manikin, as big as a thumb, resides in the hearts of all men. Him you should carefully separate from your body just as the middle blade of a grass should be very carefully separated from it. Know Him to be spotless and eternal" (Katha, Valli VI, 17).

"The Self which is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest remains hidden in the recess of the heart of a living being. He who is free from all attachments realises through His grace the Lord who is majesty itself and is not reached by ritual" (Sveta-svatara, III).

"He is one, has all things under His control, is the Soul of all souls, and makes His one self appear as many. Those wise people who see Him inside their own selves enjoy eternal bliss and not others" (Katha, V, 12).

Thus according to the ancient sages Brahman is to be realised in the region of the heart. Bhagavan Sri Krishna also teaches, "God lives in the heart of all living beings, and He with the help of His Maya directs the movement of all of them who are seated in the machines of their bodies." Every Hindu, of whatever denomination he may be, tries to see God

in his heart, sitting in the posture of meditation, closing all his organs of sense as well as those of activity.

Buddha realised Nirvana inside himself. Christ has taught, "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke XVII, 21). Mahomet saw God in the seventh Heaven sitting in the cave of Mount Hara, closing his eyes, and so he must have seen Him inside himself.

Thus from the teachings and realisations of great teachers we find that God is to be realised inside ourselves, in the region of our heart. So much we learn from them after hearing their teachings carefully and deeply pondering over them. Then the search should begin in right earnest inside my own ego. This 'I' may be very limited, may seem to be very blind, very helpless, yet it is nothing but a bit of Pure Consciousness, and I have absolute mastery over it, and it is one with myself. So if Brahman is to be searched in consciousness, the nearest one is my own ego. Hence I should not think poorly about myself, as through me alone Brahman can be realised.

That this ego is not one with my body or mind can be easily understood by studying the phenomenon of sleep. When I am awake, I am in every portion of my body. But when I fall asleep, I am not in any one of my external organs, either of knowledge or of action. This requires no proof. Now if I were one and the same as my body, separation in that case would be impossible. How can I separate me from myself? I can always separate or distinguish me from that which is not myself. Hence the organs of knowledge and those of action, which make up the external portion of my whole living organism, are distinct and separate from me. But this does not

prove that I am distinct from my mind. The same mind is to be found when I dream in the course of my sleep. So mind is there even in the condition of my sleep. But I do not always dream when I sleep. There is also dreamless sleep, otherwise known as sound sleep. At that time I do not think, feel and will; not only that. I do not remember anything at all. Not only the world, including my own body as well as the charming forms of my wife and children, but even the very memory of it has left me. Both of them have slipped off from me. So the mind is not there. But where am I at the time? Have I left the body? If that were the case, the body would be dead. You may call the dead body of a man ever so loudly; the body is never going to be alive and conscious. But that is not the case with a sleeping man. He is somewhere in the remote corner of this body taking rest, just as a man desiring to take rest wants to avoid all sorts of disturbances and so leaves the street-side rooms of his house and goes to a solitary corner remote from the bustle of crowds that pass by in the street. If at that time a friend comes to see, having an urgent news to communicate to him, he will have to give loud calls before he can make him aware of his presence. But any amount of loud call or ringing the call-bell would never bring the man if he were not at home. In the same manner, you will have to give loud calls, nay, sometimes even push and shake him, in order to wake him up or bring him back to his mind and senses. Hence when I sleep, I simply take rest in a solitary place in some corner of my body. Let me try to find out that corner. It is a fact that I do not stay in any one of the ten external organs which make up the exterior portion of my body. It is also a fact that I

do not live in my brain which is the instrument of mind, as I do not think, feel, will and remember anything. So I do not stay in the head, the hands and the legs. Then I must be living somewhere inside the trunk as I do not live in any of my sense organs. Even in waking condition I do not live in the alimentary canal as I have nothing to do with the digestion of my food. I know to cook all sorts of savoury dishes. I know how to put them into the cavity of mouth, I know how to relish and swallow them. But how, afterwards, living blood is manufactured out of the food-stuff, I know nothing about, not even the greatest scientist of our time. No man, however clever, has the power to produce one drop of living blood out of the most nourishing food. That power belongs to the creator who in that capacity goes by the name of Vaisvanara (Gita, XV, 14). What is my relationship with Him? It is just as a cooly's relationship with the master builder. The cooly is ordered to bring bricks, mortar, lime, water, etc., and is paid for his services. The Master-builder of this body is inside me, and His orders come in the forms of hunger and thirst, and I am bound to obey Him, and He pays my daily wages in the form of enjoyments of the palate. Hence the whole of the alimentary canal, and the various supplementary organs such as salivary glands, peptic glands, the liver; the pancreas, the spleen, the villi, the lymphatic glands, the excretory organs, etc., are presided over by God even in my waking condition and much more so when I sleep soundly. Thus in sleep my search after me confines me to the thoracic, as I have no place in the abdominal region. Again the organ of respiration mostly acts independently of my will even

when I am awake. So in sleep it certainly acts independently of me, and hence my search ultimately confines me in the heart, as I have no place in the lungs. Therefore, when I sleep, I am made to hide myself in the recess of my heart for rest, away from the rest of the workshop of my body, which in my absence remains closed.

Physiologists regard the processes of digestion, secretion, excretion, respiration, and the rest as due to a system of nerve-cells in the spinal cord termed the reflex centres and an efferent motor nerve, the whole constituting what is called the reflex arc. Actions which take place independently of the will of man inside the body, are all due to this reflex arc, and thus most of these people think that there is no necessity of bringing in a God to preside over them. Such a baseless and absurd conclusion is the result of sheer materialistic fanaticism. The one purpose of self-preservation, individual as well as racial, pervades the whole life of man. Whatever he does physically and mentally, is done with a purpose, and that is to make him live a happy life as long as he can, and after his death, he wants his children and grand children to run the same course through all time. Every action done by him has a will behind it, and every will presupposes a conscious being in whom it is centred. The actions that are done independently of his will inside his body serve the same purpose of preserving his individual and racial self, and hence all those actions are purposeful and as such voluntary, and therefore there must be a conscious Being in whom that volition is to be centred. Since they are done independently of the will of man, they must be

done by the will of one who is higher than man, who is his preserver and master. This being goes by the name of God.

Now we have found out the real home of ego to be the heart. The other portions of the body are merely its work-shop. We have also seen that it is independent of body and mind, as it can live without them in sleep—a condition in which it is absolutely helpless. In the waking condition it gets temporary victory over unconscious matter; in the condition of sleep the latter gets temporary victory over it; and so all throughout the life-time of a man, the struggle is going on between ego and matter, each alternately getting victory over the other. But if we consider the case of ego a little more carefully, we shall come to know that matter has got the better of it. In the waking condition it is not so much helpless, as it is when sleeping. But does it not then identify itself with the body which is material on account of its ignorance? Does it know that it is independent of its body and mind? Does it know its true home to be in the heart? It has no such idea at all. Hence identifying itself with matter, it has become more material and foolish than spiritual and wise. Such is the inveteracy of this ignorance, that more than ninety-nine per cent of humanity cannot even imagine themselves as independent of body even for a moment. Even men, who are wise and who have been able to distinguish theoretically the nature of the ego from that of the body, cannot practically separate the former from the latter. For although man's true home may be the heart, he has totally forgotten it, and so has made a home for himself in this place of

sojourn, the world. Thus tied to his false home, the earth, he has no power to come back to his true home voluntarily. Only by the irresistible power of sleep, which makes him perfectly helpless, and mostly unconscious, he is forced to go there every day for some hours. Of his own accord, he never cares to go, and even if he cares, he finds that he has no power to go. Thus caught in the network of earthly attachments, he can never go out of the world, and even after his death, he eagerly takes his birth in it, not for once, but for several times; for although he may imagine himself to be mortal, thereby his immortal and eternal nature can never suffer. With whatever intensity I may imagine a rope to be a snake, the rope is never going to be a snake on account of my imagination. So man can never perish after death. He only follows the bend of his mind after he casts off his body, and as his mind loves the world, to the world he will have to come again and again, as long as he has love for it.

Why does he love the world? Because he imagines that it has got everything in it to make him perfectly happy. Indeed, it has a very charming exterior. In it, he finds his parents, wife, children, friends, relatives, neighbours,—almost all enjoyable things, like name, fame, respect, money, property, love and residence—all of which charm him so much that he has no mind to give it up. He gets so much attached to it, that one lifetime appears to him to be absolutely inadequate to enjoy it, and so again and again he returns to it and is again and again forced to go away from it by death. But he is not destined to taste the sweet fruit from this tree of the world always. Some

very bitter fruits he has to taste, although he may hate them; and gradually his false dreams begin to disappear. It no longer appears to him to be a heaven. Behind the so-called love, he finds selfishness; behind name, fame, wealth, etc., he finds anxiety and pain; behind his home, he finds impermanency; behind knowledge, he finds insurmountable ignorance; behind enjoyment, he finds a greater quantity of misery; and behind life, he detects the most abominable and fearful apparition of death. He then begins to question himself 'I love to live always; but where is that eternal life? I want to be always happy but where is that eternal enjoyment? I wish to know everything; but where is that omniscience? Certainly these are not to be found here. Then where must I search for them?' He puts these questions to himself and all his fellow-men, but finds no answer. At last the scriptures come to his aid. They tell him in unequivocal language that death does not end his existence, that he is not one and the same as his body, that he is a soul dwelling in the body; that he is eternal by his very nature, that this is not the only body in which he is dwelling, and that he had dwelt in countless bodies before and is going to dwell in countless bodies hereafter. This he feels to be a very consoling news. The very idea that he is eternal by his nature, has removed a great load of anxiety and fear from his back. The helpless, weak, timorous, miserable, hopeless and little ego has developed itself into a soul. It is no longer a poor little thing. Death is no longer a great bugbear to him. He is full of hopes and aspirations. Life has got a meaning to him; it no longer appears to him as meaningless and accidental. He thus feels himself immensely relieved.

The scriptures also point out to him a place where he can live for a very great length of time enjoying all sorts of desirable things, if he leads a life according to their injunctions. He does so, and as a result he goes to those blissful abodes after finishing his term of life here. He goes to higher and higher abodes, each more permanent than the lower ones, till he reaches the highest, which, although more permanent than all the places below, is yet not eternal. Eternal peace and bliss, which he longs so much for, cannot be found even in that blissful place which is called Satyaloka or Brahmaloaka.

Where can we find eternal peace? The Vedas cannot illumine him on the subject. Beyond the five higher spheres, the abodes of all blissful souls, they have no power to go. But when he longs for illumination, the Vedanta comes to his help and tells him, "Everlasting peace and bliss, my boy, are to be sought inside and not outside yourself." He takes the hint and tries to go inside himself, but finds that it is more easy for him to be outside than inside himself. But because he has weighed the enjoyments of the whole Universe in balance and found them wanting, he does not give up the attempt, and the more he gets defeated, the more he takes courage, till at last he succeeds in going within himself in the recess of his heart. The moment he goes there, all limitations fall off from him. He is no longer bound by his body and mind. He feels himself absolutely unconfined and free. He was searching for eternal life, all-blissfulness and all-knowledge outside himself, not knowing that all these are to be found only in him and nowhere else. He no longer struggles; all his struggles have come to an end once for all. He has

realised God inside his heart, inside himself. The ego has reached the highest rung of the ladder of evolution, and merged in infinite bliss, shouts forth, "Aham Brahmasmi"—"I am the eternal, all-blissful and all-knowing Brahman," and loses itself in, and becomes one with, Him.

This is how the ego realises salvation. But some souls there are who do not take up this method. They do not cease to go to all the higher Lokas in order to know their hollow and imperfect nature. In this world and in this life, with the help of a true teacher and properly using their power of discrimination, they are able to understand what is real and what is unreal, what is eternal and infinite, and what is non-eternal and finite, and thus knowing their self to be the only reality amidst all the unrealities that make up the Universe, the only eternal and Infinite Being amidst all the non-eternal and finite entities, try to dive deep within themselves and discover their own true nature. Although at first they have to experience almost insurmountable difficulties in conquering their minds, yet with the help of their intense devotion towards their Gurus, they gradually put down their ego, and then their individuality which distinguishes them and keeps them separate from the Lord, the Infinite Soul of the entire cosmos. When they are thus able to put down their egos and individual souls by breaking down their limitations, the Universal Soul comes to take the place of the two. When the walls of egotism and individuality are thrown down, the enclosed becomes unclosed, the confined becomes unconfined, the limited becomes limitless. Nothing new comes into existence, only that which used to be regarded as

limited is found out to be limitless and hence absolutely free.

The permanent seat of the ego is the heart. But as we have seen in our previous discourse, it is tied to the three lower centres of the body, and as such has completely forgotten its true home. Thus tied down, it can only stay in the external portion of the body with which it fully identifies itself. In this way it sometimes becomes happy and sometimes unhappy, sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious, sometimes pure, good, honest, calm, hopeful, loving, sweet and kind, and sometimes impure, bad, dishonest, restless, hasty, harsh and unkind. Thus it leads a very changeful and miserable sort of life buffeted by these pairs of opposites. It cannot be always happy, pure and good, although it may have a desire to be so. The only course left to it, if it wants to be permanently happy, pure and good, is to go beyond these pairs. Is it possible for it to do so? Let us see.

We have found out the true seat of the ego to be the heart, which it knows nothing about. It is simply seated there, in spite of its ignorance about the place, and hence how can it have any control over it? But we have to say that it presides over the whole of the nervous system; for without it, the nerves are absolutely powerless, as we have seen it to be the case in the condition of sound sleep, when all the sensory and motor nerves are perfectly inactive. The moment the ego comes back to them, they are all able to work,—the senses are able to sense, the organs of activity are able to be active, and the mind is able to think, feel, will and remember. So the ego is the rightful master of the entire nervous system, and if it cannot bring it under

its control, the cause is to be sought in its own sheer weakness and nothing else. The ego has no control over the heart which works perfectly well even when it sleeps soundly. Who directs the movement of the heart at that time, and through its ceaseless contractions and expansions, presides over the circulation of the blood all over the body? It is God. "When all the inner and outer organs of the body are sleeping, He who keeps awake and goes on producing things that they desire most, is the pure One. He is Brahman. He is described in all the scriptures as the one deathless Being. All the spheres exist in Him. He is beyond all, none can go beyond Him. This is what He is" (Katha, V. 8).

Blood is the intermediate substance that unites matter with soul. The material world gets united with the soul through the medium of blood. Out of the world comes food, and out of food God produces blood, stores it up in the heart, circulates it all over the body, and thus fills all the organs with energy to do their respective functions.

Thus we have seen that God presides over the heart and all the vessels that emanate from it with their innumerable ramifications, the lungs and the whole of the alimentary canal, and that the soul presides over the whole of the nervous system. When the ego lives in the three lower centres it goes by the name of 'man', when it lives in the heart, it goes by the name of 'soul'; and when it ultimately unifies itself with the Lord either by means of love or by means of discrimination, it goes by the name of Brahman.

Let us now see how the ego can rise up towards the heart. Sri Krishna says, "People who are attached to sensuality and power, and whose minds have

been thus misled by them, do not possess that one-pointed mind which is fit for concentration" (Gita II, 44) All the nerves ending in our senses and organs of activity are clamouring for enjoyments which do not always come. Thus they make man very restless and miserable. All his physical and mental energies necessarily become out-going, and lie scattered all over the world to which they remain tied with countless ropes of attachment. That is why it is said by the same great teacher, Sri Krishna, "One man out of thousands struggles to attain salvation, and out many such great men who struggle to be saved, one knows My true nature" (Gita VII, 3).

If I am to make a vertical section of my body through its middle, one half will be almost exactly the counterpart of the other, and the plane of section will exactly divide the spinal cord into two, passing through its central canal filled up with fluid called cerebro-spinal fluid. This minute canal of the spinal cord is continued throughout its entire length. The spinal cord is connected with the brain through the medium of the bulb (medulla oblongata), and it terminates below about the lower border of the first lumbar vertebra opposite to the navel. According to Padma Puranam (Swarga Khanda XXVII), the coiled up spiritual energy called Kundalini sleeps there in the man whose sensual propensities do not require her service. Tied to the three lower centres of his body he dissipates all his energies by his vain struggles outside himself in search after false pleasures, false life and false knowledge. When, after repeated failures and repeated experiences of various sorts of miseries, he is roused up at last to know that his senses are not his

friends; that he should not give undue liberty to them; that liberty of his senses brings slavery to himself; that by subduing and controlling them he actually becomes more powerful than the greatest conquerors of the world, who, although they may have conquered vast territories, have not the power to conquer sensuality; and that the so-called pleasures of the senses preceded and followed by miseries, are really miseries in the garb of pleasures,—then he successfully rebels against these false friends and comes out victorious and free. The world no longer appears to him to be the only real thing; it appears to him to be a vast golgotha, an endless cemetery and a horribly extensive crematorium, and he laughs at the very idea of building a permanent home in this home of death. The ties of earthly attachments snap of their own accord and the man for the first time, knows what calmness is. The world slowly passes off from him like a dream. He no longer wishes to flow out of himself along the path of his motor sensory nerves on his right side and on his left. His central nervous system, consisting of the brain and spinal cord, and having on its right and left the roots of all the nerves that carry him away to the land of ignorance and death, he naturally wants to avoid, as not only he has no liking for that land but looks towards it with abhorrence and fear. So he has no longer any leaning either to the right side (Pingala) or to the left side (Ida) of his cerebro-spinal system. He does not waver either towards this side or that, and all his previous energies, which he used to dissipate before in vain search after pleasure, gather themselves up in the third centre (Manipura) where Kundalini (spiritual energy) lies sleeping, and

serve to wake her up. Thus roused up from her long slumber, and equipped with those new energies, she begins her upward march in search after her Lord, the Infinite and Eternal Spirit, taking the man along with her. Thus the man is gradually lifted up through the minute canal (Sushumna) of the spinal cord towards the region of his heart. The more he rises up, the more all limitations fall off from him one after another, till at last, passing through the centres (Chakras) known as Anahata and Visuddha in the path of the Sushumna, he gets into the fourth ventricle (Ajnachakra), opposite to the region lying between the two eyebrows, and almost loses himself at the sight of the infinite glory of the Eternal Spirit, and then passing through a small foramen that pierces the piece of pia mater which forms a part of its roof, goes beyond the pairs of cerebral lobes which constitute the brain, the centre of almost all activities, to the peaceful abode of Brahma (the creator). When he thus passes into the subarachnoid region (Brahmaloka), full of cerebro-spinal fluid and a network of fibrous tissue, it appears to him like an inverted lotus of myriad petals on account of its hemispherical concavity. Under this lotus he sees the brain floating, in which he discovers Consciousness (Siva), seated; united in love with Energy (Sakti), and thus giving birth to Will that creates, preserves and destroys. In this exalted position of a peaceful and quiet witness, he realises his all-perfect and infinite nature and thus becomes liberated.

This onward movement of the ego from the seat of Kundalini to the lotus of myriad petals has been found out to be of five kinds, either like that of an ant,

a fish, a snake, a frog, or a monkey, according to the intensity of its desire to realise the goal.

Thus we learn from our ancient sages: "One hundred and one canals have emanated from the heart. One of them has gone beyond the cerebrum piercing through it. When a man goes up by that he becomes immortal. Other canals, going in various directions cause repeated births and deaths" (Katha, VI. 16).

This is the usual method of realising the highest Truth. But the soul, being really infinite, cannot have any motion; for how can infinity go from one place to another, it having no outside and so nowhere to go to?¹ Hence whenever motion is ascribed to the Infinite Being, we do it out of our ignorance of His true nature. But a Jnani or wise man, who has been able to understand clearly his infinite nature intellectually, from whom all desires have fallen off and who has thus been left pure and single, has not to go from one place to another, from a lower to a higher centre. He

¹ Says Sri Sankara: "The wise man, who, by realising himself to be Brahman, the absolutely one without a second, has rent asunder the ties of ignorance, etc., and who even in his lifetime has thus become one with Him, has not to move from one place to another. This we have just now learned from the Sruti which says, 'In this life he realises Brahman,' and also in another place the same Sruti says, 'His vital energies never go out; having become Brahman, he only gets unified with Him.' Again, in order to show in full relief the glorious result that comes out of the knowledge of the real and infinite Brahman, it is also said there that those who are worshippers of His finite aspect and are concerned with knowledge other than that of Brahman, as well as those who, on the contrary, are worldly-minded have to go from body to body (Commentary, Katha, VI. 16.)

knows that his true home is the heart where he unceasingly resides in the three conditions of waking, dream and sleep, whether he knows it or not. In the heart alone the Unmanifested Being of infinite power manifests Himself as soul and ego, both of which never go out of it really, although they imagine them to be outside it. "In the recess of the heart are both soul and God, for so the Vedas declare" (The Brahma Sutra, Chapter I, Section II, 11'. But as no amount of imagination on my part can transform the rope into a snake, so, although I may imagine to be away from my heart, such an imagination can never take me out of it. The wise one who thinks in this way knows that he was, is, and is going to be, inside his heart until he realises in this life his infinite nature which breaks all limitation of body, mind and heart. At that time he sees the whole Universe within himself and not himself in the Universe. He may live in the body or may not; there is nothing to bind him there. He has become perfectly free.

The nature of every man is divine, and some day or other, either in this or in some future life, he is bound to realise his divine nature, as none can go against his own nature. The saying, "A fool hath said in his heart that there is no God," is perfectly true. For what is God? God is bliss. The great sage Bhrigu, under the instruction of his father Varuna, led an ascetic life. After leading such a life, "He came to know that God is bliss, as all these living beings are born of bliss, go in search of bliss, and merge into it. This is what is called the wisdom of Bhrigu and Varuna" (Taittiriya, III, 6). There is no atheist who does not want to be blissful and if therefore God is

bliss, even he is a theist and not an atheist, being at heart a seeker after bliss.

Everyone is in search after happiness, but all are searching it in wrong directions—in trying to satisfy the cravings of their senses, in getting money, name, earthly power, etc., and so they are constantly restless. Says the Sruti, "Man does not live by his in-going and out-going breaths, but on account of Him in whom they exist." Again, "The Manikin who sends the in-going breath upwards and out-going breath downwards is seated in the middle. Him all the gods worship." So the Lord sits in the middle, neither in the right nor in the left, neither in front, nor behind, neither above nor below. He occupies that central point in the heart from which He directs the centripetal and centrifugal forces that keep up the continuous on-flow of life. That blessed man alone is qualified to realise Him, who is free from pride, ignorance and the evils of attachment, who always meditates upon the true nature of Self, has no earthly desire, and is free from the pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain, honour and insult, profit and loss. Sri Ramakrishna says, "As long as the bee is outside the lotus, so long it will have to fly round and round and buzz, but once it gets into the flower, and tastes the honey there, both its wanderings and buzzings cease. So, as long as man remains outside the lotus of his heart, he has to wander in search of pleasure in vain, but once he goes inside it and tastes the nectar of Divine communion, all his wanderings cease once for all."

SINGLE LECTURES

SINGLE LECTURES

I

THE PATH TO PERFECTION

EVERY bit of our activity presupposes some want, and this conscious activity goes by the name of life. Where activity is conscious, that is what we call life; but when it is unconscious, as in a big engine or machine, we do not regard it as life. Only when activity knows that it is active, it is life. Every activity furthermore is actuated by some want. What has made me active? The desire to get something. Why have you come here? Because you think that you will get knowledge or help of some kind. We never take one step forward without the hope of getting something or realising something. All activity presupposes restlessness, and restlessness comes from want. So long as that restlessness is in you, you will have to be active; you will try to satisfy the want in yourself.

But has man really any want? Great God-men like Sri Krishna, Incarnations like Christ and Buddha have taught otherwise. Their definition of man is wonderful. They say that he is birthless, deathless, free from want, all-blissful, self-existent, self-luminous. Even the trident of Siva has no power to destroy him. He is eternal and indestructible by his very nature. But if that is the definition of man, then what am I? I am also called a man. But I am only three and a half cubits in length; I am born; I die; I have-

many wants. Can you point out to me a single man from the poorest labourer to the greatest emperor who is not full of wants? Man is, indeed, a creature of wants. The moment the baby comes out of the womb, it cries. Why? Because it has a want. Man is born in want, he lives in want, and in want he dies. Out of want he has come into existence, in want he lives and from want he dies.

Then what is the relation of this man to that other man, defined as birthless, deathless, blissful and so on? How can the one be equal to the other? How can the one be united with the other? One is beyond all want, all fear, all birth and death; while the other is a man who is full of all sorts of fears and desires, who was born, and who must die. How can there be any relationship between these two men apparently existing at opposite poles? Yet there is a relation. This man who has birth and death, who is finite and limited—this very man points to his infinite nature. Man is always restless, always moving from place to place. Why? because he is never satisfied, because nothing brings him permanent satisfaction; and this very fact that he is dissatisfied with his finite nature shows that it is not his natural condition. The fact that he has infinite ambition, that he has insatiable hunger for more and more, proves that he is infinite by nature; and that is why he is always dissatisfied with whatever is finite.

Go to any man, and you will find that he is discontented with his finite condition. Not one of you is really content. You may say that you are content with your one hundred rupees a month, but that is laziness. You must never confound laziness with

contentment. Nachiketas shows us what true contentment is. Yama offered him wealth, a whole kingdom, beautiful women; but Nachiketas knew that truth alone would satisfy him, and he wanted nothing else. But if anyone should offer you two hundred rupees instead of one hundred, would you not take them? That shows that you are not really contented with what you now have. If you will analyse yourself, you will see that there is no end to your ambition. When will that ambition come to an end? Only when you can say, "I am the master of all. The whole Universe belongs to me. I want nothing. I have transcended death. I am responsible to none." Until this comes, your ambition will never leave you. You want to get rid of limitation, and until you can say that you are limitless, deathless, immortal, you will not be at rest.

This is what is called Mukti or salvation. So, although this little man seems so diametrically opposed to that great man—that infinite man—yet this little man will never rest until he has become one with that infinite man, which shows that that is his real nature. If you take a fish and place it on the peacock throne of Shah Jehan, one of the emperors of India, and bow down and worship it, will it be happy? No, it will rather say, "Throw me even into a cesspool, but do not keep me out of water." For water is its natural element. In the same way, you are all restless after your lost nature.

There is no man who is not restless. And restless for what? Restless for his lost nature, his infinite nature. Blessed is he who is thus restless, and most miserable is he who is contented with his present

lot. The contented man is no man; he is no more than a brute. You may keep an elephant tied all its life, and it will not mind if you give it some food. Men who are thus contented are no better than animals. "Eating, sleeping, procreating and fear—we have in common with lower animals"; and if we do not know to do anything higher and better than these, how can we distinguish ourselves from them?

Wherever there is discontent, you must know that there is the germ of greatness. Read the life of any great man; you will find how constantly active and restless he was, always seeking more and more. And those restful people who have no ambition—they are destined to be coolies. They are just like those bullocks that turn round and round the mill all day long but, never leave the groove. When these people were at school they did not care to learn; they were quite content to be at the lower end of the class. But with them there were some who were restless, who were ambitious to learn, and they are the high officers and the men of importance to-day. Study the lives of all great men, and you will see that they have become great because they were restless. Therefore do not cease to be active.

Be never satisfied with little. You are infinite, you are all-perfect, and until you realise your infinite nature, you must not stop. Do not think that you are intellectually limited. You have the brain of a Socrates. You have the intelligence of a Newton. Only you have allowed a lot of dust and dirt to cover it over. Wipe away the dust, arouse your ambition, stir up your activity, and know that all power is latent

in you. You are not limited. No, you are as much limitless as any of the greatest sages of yore, between whom and God space and time never intervened.

Our scriptures teach us that the greatest sin is to call a man sinner. The moment you think yourself a sinner, weak, you forget your infinite nature and identify yourself with the body and mind. This identifying yourself with the body and mind is the source of all your miseries. If you want to realise your infinite nature, throw off all association with your finite nature. Forget your body and mind. Disidentify yourself with your body and mind. You are constantly doing it in fact. Are you always thinking, "I am tall or short, I am dark or fair, I am lean or stout," etc.? You only think all this when you stand in front of a mirror. What is the definition of health? A man is perfectly healthy when he does not remember that he has a body. Only when you have a headache, do you remember that you have a head, only when you have a pain in the leg, do you think of your leg. You are spirit itself. You are life itself. Although your body sits upon you with so much power, still it cannot keep you from forgetting it. When you are enjoying a beautiful scene or beautiful music, you forget it; that is, for the time being you have transcended the body. This is your true nature, and that is the reason why you are happy. When you are calm, quiet, lost in thought, you also do not remember your body, and only when something comes suddenly to disturb this state, you call it pain.

In enjoyment, thought expires. When you are thinking, when you have no consciousness of your body—where have you gone at that time? You have

gone out of your body and mind, and that is enjoyment. Enjoyment is your true nature, therefore you like enjoyment. Man is always restless after happiness, and he is restless because some misery is pinching him. Man is constantly in search of enjoyment; and he is going from this village to that village, from this town to that town, from this country to that country, only to get his lost enjoyment. And this search after enjoyment is the same as the search after God; for God and bliss are the same. They are synonymous. Therefore it is said, "A fool hath said, in his heart there is no God." For out of God all happiness has come, and everyone who seeks happiness, seeks God.

Our definition of God is Ananda (bliss). There is no atheist who does not desire happiness, and that happiness is God. Out of bliss has come the whole creation, in bliss it exists, and into bliss will it merge. Out of God we and the whole Universe have come, in God we rest and to God shall we go. Hence bliss and God are synonymous. So no man can say that he is an atheist; for every man believes in happiness and happiness is God. Every man, indeed, is after happiness, and what happiness do you want? Happiness that knows no break. You may take this temporary happiness, because it gives you a little pleasure and you want pleasure; but your ideal is the happiness that never ends.

Happiness that has no break goes by the name of God. Happiness that has a break goes by the name of sensuality. You may be content for a moment with this limited happiness which gives you momentary enjoyment, but breakless, eternal enjoyment is your

ideal and you must realise it. The man who hurries through his meals, rushes to office and works hard the whole day, is really in search of pleasure and believes that he can get it by earning money. And that man who is sitting in a corner, concentrating his mind, trying to forget his environment, trying to find God inside himself, he is doing the same thing.

Now let us examine the two methods. One is really after money because it will bring food, comforts and pleasures for himself and his family. He tries to earn money and to earn power, because he thinks that if he has power he can force Nature to bring him whatever he wants. But this method is very precarious. He may get money, but he may not be able to digest the food or enjoy the comforts it brings. I knew a millionaire in Calcutta who was only able to take barley water, and thus he was not even so well off as his lowest servant in point of enjoyment. Then if the man has wealth, how long will he be able to enjoy it? Only so long as the body lasts. We all know that there is nothing so uncertain in this world as life. To the baby in the cradle, to the youth and to the old man, to the rich and to the poor, at any moment death may come. And when we identify ourselves with the body, when we believe that by satisfying the body, or by satisfying the mind, we satisfy ourselves, then we can understand how perishable happiness must appear.

Every man will have to undergo six sorts of transformations. There was a baby in the womb, and only because there was a baby in the womb, did a baby come out. When it is born, it will have to increase in stature and so undergo all sorts of changes,—it must become a boy, a youth, a man. Then what will follow?

A gradual dwindling away. The eyes will lose their power, the ears will cease to hear, the hands and feet will grow less active, the memory will fail. This is the life-history of every living being; and such a being, who is tied to a body and whose mind is full of doubts—how can he expect eternal life?

Yet no man wants to die. There is nothing man hates so much as death. But if this be the only life we have, man cannot escape death; so he cannot hope to be happy. But what is the definition of life? Life means *being*—to be. Death means *non-being*—not to be. Now we know that out of being non-being can never come, and being can never become non-being. So life cannot be transformed into death, nor death into life. Therefore if man is living, he cannot die. But where can he find that life which cannot be transformed into death? He must go beyond the body to find it. And if he goes beyond the body, he must go beyond the whole Universe; for even upon this fragile frame of yours, the whole Universe is resting. Upon the eyes, the whole form world is existing; upon the ears, the whole sound world is existing; upon the tongue, the whole world of taste is existing.

The phenomenon of sleep will prove this very easily. So long as the eyes can see, forms will exist for you; so long as the nose can smell, odours will exist for you; so long as the ears can hear, sounds will exist for you; and so with every sense. Now that is the waking condition, when you are in your eyes, your ears and all your senses? Then there is a state of mere thought when you are in your mind exclusively. But there is a condition when you go away from your mind, and that condition is known as sound sleep. Then

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a friend may come and sing a sweet tune beside you, but you do not hear him, because you are not in your ears. You are in your body, no doubt, but you are not in your ears or any of your senses. Yet although you are away from your mind and senses, you are still in your body; for if I give you a good push, you wake up. And what does this waking up mean? You come back to your mind, you come back to your senses. While you were asleep, your wife was there by your side, but you did not know it, and so was it with everything about you and with the whole Universe. The condition, therefore, on which the whole Universe is existent, is that you must be present in your mind and your senses. While you were asleep, did any Universe exist for you? Did any memory of it exist for you? No. So, although the little body seems so fragile—and it is no doubt very fragile—yet it is the prop on which the whole Universe is resting. It is therefore evident that to go away from the Universe we must go away from the mind and the senses; and when you do that, you find that eternal life. It was in this way that your forefathers realised their eternal nature. They did it by going away from their external senses and from their inner sense, the mind. And if you can do this, at once you will realise your eternal life. Then absolute bliss will be yours. This is salvation.

Thus you find that one method leads you astray, and the other takes you to the goal. The method you are all following, earning money etc., is a false method; for you are thereby worshipping this body of yours. It is the only god you worship. Because you worship this god, you love your wife; because you worship this god, you love good dishes, beautiful scenery, sweet sounds,

etc. But when you serve a master, you expect some wages. Yet when you work for this god, your body, what does it give you? It leads you to the thing that you hate most—death. You have been serving this master for so many lives and each time he has rewarded you with death. Therefore this cannot be true service. If you want to render true service which will bring you a true reward, serve the real God. Then you will get eternal life.

The path of service is inwards and not outwards. The path which leads you to realise life eternal is not by the exercise of your out-going energies, but of your in-going energies. You must collect your energies and direct them inwards. Unless you do this, you are no better than the lower animals. The real life is inside yourself, not outside. But you must work hard to find it. You have been worshipping this god of your body for so many lives; it is not easy to begin to worship the true God all at once. It is easier to conquer the whole world than one's own mind. Hence, even so great a warrior as Arjuna had to admit that although he had conquered so many kingdoms, he was unable to master his own mind. Why? Arjuna was a hero, there was no doubt of it; but because he had never worked in this field, he felt himself powerless. And we are like Arjuna. But to realise your eternal nature in this life, you must take this path. There is no other path leading to salvation.

So you see that the path has been found, which will make you the happiest of men, the wealthiest of men, and the most powerful of men. Now what is necessary? The will. Unless you have the will to follow it, it is useless to know the path. You may know

how to cook the best dishes, but unless you go to the kitchen and actually make some of these dishes, your knowledge is of little use to you. So the mere knowledge that the path is inside, will not help you. You must work hard and go there. Religion is therefore a thing that is absolutely practical. It has nothing to do with disputing and theorising. That may come before you have the will to follow the path. But you may be the most ignorant man, still if you have an intense desire to go to God, you can go inside and reach Him without any learning whatever. Then even the most learned will come and sit at your feet. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was almost illiterate. He scarcely knew how to read and write, yet the greatest Pandits used to come to him to have their doubts cleared. How was it that he was able to do this? Because he had the intense will to realise God, and he realised Him. His life is a standing protest against the view that a man can only know by reading books or by passing examinations. This is a very meagre idea of knowledge. After your life-long struggle you really know nothing. Socrates was the wisest of men, because he knew that he knew nothing.

Such a man not only sees God himself, but he can make others see Him. Swami Vivekananda in his boyhood was constantly in search after a man who could say that he had seen God. Otherwise, he said, how could he know that He exists? Whenever he heard of a great Sadhu or a great teacher, he would go and ask "Does God exist?" The man would answer, "Yes". Then he would put the question, "Have you seen Him?" When they would answer in the negative, he would turn and go away. Nowhere could he find a

man who said that he had seen God, and for that reason he had come to the conclusion that God, was a matter of imagination. Then one day he came to this prophet of Dakshineswar, to this illiterate sage, and he asked him, "Have you seen God?" At once Sri Ramakrishna replied, "Yes". "Can you make me see Him?" "I can", was the Bhagavan's immediate answer. At last Swamiji was satisfied; and this is the reason why in all his books he insists over and over again that religion consists in realisation. Religion is indeed altogether a matter of realisation.

You must see God. But to do it, you will have to work hard. First you will have to overcome the old habits, these habits which have come by worshipping the false God through so many lives. You must conquer the mind and the senses. Unless, like Christ, you crucify this body and these senses, you cannot hope to rise, you will not be able to raise yourself from this dead body. If you would raise yourself, you must crucify the body and conquer the senses. This everyone must do. And the best means, Sri Ramakrishna gives. He says, if you would conquer your senses, you must regard God as the highest. If you are a lover of beauty, where can you find such beauty as in God? If you are a lover of eloquence, who can be more eloquent than God, from whom all the Vedas have come into existence? If you are a lover of power, what being can be more powerful than God? Every man loves one of these, and all of these are to be found in an infinite degree in God. If you love a beautiful woman, her beauty will only last for a short time, but God's beauty is perennial. So if you want perennial beauty, indestructible life, all power and all knowledge, you must

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go to God. But to go to God, you do not need any money, you do not have to buy a ticket. To go to Him, you do not need your legs; to see Him, you do not need your eyes; to hear Him, you do not need your ears. He is inside you; and to reach Him, you have to shut all these. To see Him, you must shut your eyes, to hear Him, you must close your ears, to go to Him, you must give up all outer activity.

So take the hint and go inside and realise Him. Then only will you be a true man. But to do this you must have an intense yearning. If once, however, you recognise your real relation to Him—that He is your real father and the real mother your real friend and real companion—and you do go to Him, then you will be infinitely rewarded; for He will make Himself even your servant in order to care and provide for you. Therefore he alone is a truly sane man who chooses God; for it is only from Him that you can get the highest bliss and the highest wisdom.

II

THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION

This infinite Universe, occupying immense space, is a self-evident fact which no human being can ever deny if he but possesses a very small amount of common sense. A man is born with the idea of a body and a corresponding Universe imaged in that body. Once upon a time a great Western philosopher doubted the existence of the Universe as well as the existence of his mirror-like organism, in which alone the world gets reflected and thus becomes perceptible and but for which a man can have no power to know anything about it,—nay, even it would have been as though it had not existed at all for him. But although he doubted anything and everything, he could not doubt the doubter. That some one was doubting all this while, this fact, he could not doubt or deny, and so at last he was compelled to give out his celebrated sentiment in the saying, *cogito ergo sum*, which means, "I think, therefore, I am," for doubting is but another name for thinking. Thus establishing the validity of his own existence, he had to establish the reality of every other thing; for if his existence was a reality, why should not the existence of other people and other things be similarly a reality? Thus even scepticism at last landed him on the *terra firma* of stubborn and immovable faith, established upon the adamant rock of Truth. So we see that the wise and the ignorant

alike have to believe that the man and his Universe are self-evident realities.

As the world and the man that perceives and enjoys it are both realities, it is but natural that a man should enjoy the world as much as he can, enjoyment being the one principal passion of all human beings. And, therefore, how to enjoy the world most, should naturally be the one subject for the deep and exclusive consideration of most of the good and intelligent people. Thus almost all the people of the world have been devoting the whole of their time in making a heaven of this earth by endeavouring to minimise its misery and enhance its pleasures. The mollusc-like, soft, pulpy, fragile and altogether forlorn child of man is ushered into the inclement worldly atmosphere, which begins to pinch it on all sides as soon as it comes out of the soft, warm womb of its mother. The weeping image of God is lulled to rest and enjoyment by the intensely eager maternal care and love, as well as by the fond and fervid attachment of a loving father and by the helping hands of more willing relatives and friends. Thus, although it comes in contact with a Nature that tries to cast it out of her dominion as soon as she meets it, it is saved from such a misfortune by another and a higher Nature in the shape of love, which is ready to sacrifice all her comfort, nay, even her own self, for the sake of that innocent and helpless being. In this way the child increases in stature and strength and gradually learns to hold its own ground against the attack of an adverse and inclement world which, at last, it mostly brings under its control and forces to yield whatever it desires. Thus, in course of time, the combined effects of the

united struggles of all the children of men have made this earth, which naturally is in no way friendly to us, almost a home—a sweet home to each and every one of them. Their fondness for it has been naturally enhanced by the consideration that it is the prize of a life-long struggle; and that is the reason why no man is ever willing to lose his possession here and thus bid farewell to it. They cling to it as so many leeches, even if they have to suck nothing but bitter venom out of it. Men rotting under abject poverty, the half-starved and famine-stricken, the loathsome leper, the elephant-legged destined to carry all his life a hateful weight more heavy than he can properly bear, the blind, the decrepit and the tottering old, will bear all these miseries with alacrity rather than make their escape by spurning such an infernal life. The scientists, with their newly invented arts, are engaged in beautifying this earth, in forcing her to yield all those things which are calculated to contribute to human luxury and comfort, in making accessible what has been inaccessible to her, in daily discovering some new truths wherewith to get some fresh advantages over her; and by all such means, they hope to make her their permanent abode which may vie with or even surpass heaven itself.

But as a chronic rheumatic pain driven from the head takes shelter in the heels, driven thence takes shelter in the knee-joints, driven thence too goes again, to the head, and in this way baffles all the skill of the doctors, similarly the misery which everyone born of woman is destined to suffer here, baffles all the skill of the scientist whose one end and aim is to make the earth free from its ravages. They simply

destroy old miseries to bring in new ones. The modern reformers and philosophers abolish the old caste system based upon heredity and moral proficiency to introduce a new system based upon Mammon's smile. Nothing is more deluding and encouraging than success, however little that may be. The modern thinkers, puffed up with vanity on account of their scientific achievements, forget that they are mortal beings, supplied but with a limited power of thinking, knowing and enjoying, and also that to fight against Nature, which is like a river that has no beginning and no end, and to force her unravel all her mysteries, is as childish and foolish as an ant's attempt to carry the whole range of the Himalayas upon its back and throw it into the ocean. The modernist thinks himself much more powerful than his rustic forefathers, but he overlooks one important fact,—that the senses at whose service he has sold his entire life, were obedient servants of most of them. Thus they were masters of his master, and as such can there be any question as to their possessing powers far higher than what he is destined to have? I am not telling that they were perfect, and that they had not to suffer all those miseries that we have to suffer now and even more. But that they were far more strong than ourselves to fight and conquer those miseries, is a fact which we cannot deny when we consider the intensity of their mental strength which rose above all carnal appetites and passions. They had to endure heavier downpours of earthly difficulties, but, fortunately they were supplied with a thick coating to protect themselves against such inclemencies, whereas, although downpours may not be so severe now, still we have grown so very delicate and!

our artificial means to protect ourselves are as yet so very imperfect that it has almost become impossible for us not to succumb to them. Modern civilisation has invented thousands of luxuries for us, and these luxuries only serve to make us more and more delicate, and consequently more and more weak, and weakness gives free access to all sorts of miseries which tyrannise over us. When we consider all these points, can we assert that we are more fortunate than they? Whatever that be, let us return to our subject.

We have seen how this love of life employs all our energies to make this earth, which proved no friend to us at the time of our first introduction to it, a sweet home for us, and how all our attempts in that direction are crowned with very little success. We have also seen how we come to love this unfriendly earth by considering it a well-earned prize after a lifelong struggle; and what is gained after a long struggle naturally becomes more dear to us than those things which we get without any struggle whatever.

The world, of itself, will never give anything to us; and we, on the other hand, having the power to compel it to deliver to us the little good that it is capable of yielding, find a peculiar pleasure in exerting all that power against it. Thus the struggle for existence ceases to be a painful operation, and life becomes interesting and worth living.

As a wrestler finds always a peculiar pleasure in struggling with a man who is equally powerful, similarly every human being a born wrestler, as it were, finds a peculiar pleasure in fighting against his environments which are not always friendly to him. This shows that he is a master of Nature. He cannot suffer another to disobey or overrule him, and whoever dis-

obeys must consequently expect opposition from him. This opposition will last as long as the one or the other does not yield. But generally who yields in this struggle between man and his surroundings? Although man sometimes seems to yield, he can never yield, to rule being his nature. He simply stops to gather strength for a while; with fresh vigour he again girds up his loins to resume the fight. The fighting goes on as long as man does not come out a victor, and the victor man then becomes the ruler of the Universe. It is our purpose in the following pages to point out how this victory may be effected.

If we consider time, we can never imagine either its beginning or its end; such is also the case with space which is limitless. Our naked eye descries a limited number of stars every night in the azure vault of heaven. The number of stars when seen through an ordinary telescope becomes tenfold, and a more powerful telescope increases the number a hundredfold. The stronger the telescope, the greater the number of stars seen through it. There are still stars whose rays have not yet reached us. This the scientists have discovered by their observations. Sometimes in the telescopic Universe the astronomer suddenly discovers the appearance of a new star. He explains it in this way. The star is so distant that its rays, travelling with an incredible velocity towards us since its creation, could only reach his field of view at the moment of his observation, and that is why he sees a new star where there was none before. All these facts show that the number of worlds, both seen and unseen, is infinitely large, and they are eternal without a beginning. Hence creation is without

beginning and is coeval with time. Time, space and creation being all limitless, it is impossible for a limited individual to have any but a very partial comprehension of them. And is not every human being limited? He is destined to live here, at most, for a hundred years. He may be called away at any moment of his life, even when he is a baby. His intellect gradually unfolds itself from his babyhood, and with the increase of years it also increases in strength; but it is never allowed to develop itself fully, for with the expiration of his limited life, it also will have to bid farewell to the Universe in its abortive and premature state. Thus the very intellect of man shows that it is altogether powerless to have any knowledge of the Universe proper, and that an attempt on its part to solve the mystery of creation is simply foolishness and madness. All our sciences are imperfect. They are mere guesses. To study even one of such imperfect sciences properly takes up the whole life-time of a man and this science at last leads him to the brink of infinity and commands him, saying, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther". The man then becomes speechless and stupefied. He knows not whence he has come, and where he is to go. His beginning is a mystery, his end is also a mystery. In the middle he feels that he exists and the conventional names of Hindu, Moham-medan, Christian, brahmin, pariah, patrician, ple-beian, etc., under which men rank themselves, only confirm this feeling. Then alone he clearly under-stands the vanity of life. Then alone he thinks that all his University degrees, his wealth and fame are all as nothing. "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, and all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave"

—appear to him as a false mirage without any substance. Such is the state of a really learned man. He lives in a world of wonders and loses himself in it and then tries to search himself out, saying, "Who am I? Whence am I? Where am I to go?" Thus man is apprised of his real situation. At this stage of his life begins his new religious life.

Let us leave him here and study the life of the men of the world—men who are perfectly satisfied with their homes and families, riches and titles. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna says: "When the fish are caught in the net of a fisherman, one or two of them effect their escape by rending the net. Some of them struggle hard to get out of it but are not so fortunate as the former, while others do not struggle at all. Similarly there are three classes of men here, the first few struggle hard to get rid of all worldly bondages and at last effect their escape. They are called Muktas or liberated souls. The second class struggle hard against the world, as we have seen before, but are not fortunate enough to escape in this life; they are called Mumukshus or the struggling. The third class do not struggle at all. They do not know anything about the real nature of their situation, and try to live as happily as they can, even though caught in the net of death which gradually draws them from the waters of the world wherein they dance and sing as so many dead-drunk convicts who have forgotten that the next moment they are going to be hanged and their life will be at an end. These are the Baddhas or the fettered souls, who go by the name of worldly men." The worldly man is a seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting being, and he always wants to see beautiful things, to hear

the sweet melody of soft music, to feel and enjoy warm and soft embraces of loving friends, to smell fresh-blown and dewy flowers of all climes and ages, and taste the richest and most delicious viands which art has spared no pains to make alluring even to gods. Science and art are his best friends in procuring a considerable portion of all those necessities of his life, which make him forgetful of everything else. He employs every moment of his life in the pursuit of all these sensual pleasures. That is the one occupation of his life which he falsely deems to be endless and permanent. The idea of death has no place in him, and like an immortal god, the mortal son of man drinks the inebriating cup filled with the venom of passions and appetites from the hand of a choice beauty of rare merits. These sensual attractions always waylay him, and at last instead of reaching home, he finds himself in the valley of death.

Attractions are always misleading. It always makes us forgetful of our duties. The boy hurriedly takes his meal, dresses himself, and takes his necessary books and runs to his school to reach there in time. He hopes to get a prize for his regular and timely attendance at the end of the year, and is very happy with the idea. He is halfway between his home and school, and there he finds that a large concourse of people has gathered together and each and everyone of them is intent upon hearing a sweet melody coming out from the midst of the crowd, poured forth from the throat of a musician of exceptional merits. On enquiry he learns that it is his most favourite musician that is singing and can he lose so rare an opportunity of enjoying the music of a man whom he loves

so much ? He forgets his school, his lessons and his prize, and loses himself in the melody and richness of the voice of his beloved musician. An hour elapses before the musician stops, and the boy suddenly awakes, as if from a very pleasant dream, to find himself again in the matter-of-fact world where there is a school for him to go to, and a master to chastise him for the irregularity of his attendance. He does not like the idea of the school at all, which an hour ago he had been thinking of with so much pleasure. His love for music is the cause of his undutifulness. So if a man wants to be prosperous, great, good and dutiful to himself as well as others, he must do away with all sorts of sensual attractions as much as he can. When no temptation will be strong enough to waylay him, when he has gained mastery over the senses and consequently over the world which he perceives, takes in and reflects upon through the help of the senses—then he will be as firm as the rock itself. No storm of passion, however severe, will have any power to shake his equanimity at the time. The sages, therefore, advise that there are two paths here for man to go through—the path of duty, and the path of pleasure. The wise discriminate between the two; good befalls those people who travel along the path of duty, and those lose their ends who take up the path of pleasure.

The man of the world, whose highest ideal is sensual enjoyment, does not get that enjoyment very often here, the world being a mixture of pleasure and pain. Moreover, all such pleasures make him forgetful of the real nature of the circumstances with which he is surrounded. He leads a very reckless and immoral life. Any good thing which does not belong to him,

simply on account of its being good and attractive, is sure to draw his whole soul, and if an opportunity offers itself, he will feel no scruple to appropriate it to himself. If the world were composed only of such people, then there would have been no law, no morality, no goodness, and consequently no happiness here at all. Thieves and robbers, the wicked and the profligate, the treacherous and the lewd would then have made this earth of ours a den of misery. But fortunately, there is another class of people, who, although they think this world to be their home, have goodness enough to enjoy it peacefully in company with others. They honour others' rights to live here and enjoy it as much as their own. They can feel for others unlike the former who are simply blinded by the gnawing passions that are constantly eating into their hearts. Sympathy and love for others cannot make them wholly blind and inconsiderate as to the necessities and requirements of their fellow-brethren. These are called the moral and good people of the world. The former may be safely compared to and classed with the brutes, but the latter are men, although not gods. We call them men because they have no higher ideal than this world, and they think themselves as preeminently the inhabitants of the earth. They may or may not believe in an after-life; or a God who regulates this whole Universe. Some of them aver that, even if God exists, He has nothing to do with them and they too have nothing to do with Him. For them it is immaterial whether God exists or not. They have the broad world before them, as well as the eleven senses which constitute the whole of human organism wherewith to enjoy that world along with others. So their highest aim is to find out

the means by which they can secure the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people, with the smallest amount of labour. These means constitute the laws according to which they do all their actions. They are called utilitarians, inasmuch as they search after utility in all things, and whatever has no utility in it, they reject as something superfluous. In this way they have established as highly useful such good qualities as truthfulness, sympathy, love, charity, etc., on the ground of pure utility. They say, "If I be unkind to you, you are sure to be unkind to me at another time, and as unkindness is not liked by anyone, I do not want to be treated unkindly by you at all, and the best means of being treated kindly by you is my kind treatment of you. No one wants to be cheated. But if I cheat you or play false with you, you are sure to treat me in the same manner; so it is always better to be truthful and just, so that others also may be truthful and just, towards me. If I be good to the whole world the whole world will be good to me, and is not goodness therefore desirable? In this way alone, the greatest amount of good can be derived for the greatest number of individuals, with the least amount of labour and trouble. To be truthful requires always a greater intellectual effort than to tell a lie; so a truthful man is trusted, honoured and respected by everyone on earth, and, for his very truthfulness, reaps more good than a liar who, on account of untruthfulness is ever mistrusted and looked down upon by all people."

Indeed, such abstinent and moral people live a very happy life here, that is, enjoy as much of happiness as can be enjoyed in this world which, after proper analysis, can never be called a home of bliss, but rather a

den of misery. For, as long as our wives, homes, children, relatives, properties, etc., make us forget that after all we are destined to live here for a limited number of years, nay, for a few months, or days or hours or minutes even—for who knows when death may call us?—so long we can enjoy this life and regard the enjoyments of this world as real enjoyments. But when we are under the constant apprehension of heartless death, which, regardless of our intense desire to enjoy the world, snatches us away from whatever we hold most dear, then life, instead of being regarded as a source of all happiness, appears to us as a false mirage, which promises to cool down our thirst and give us the sweet, much-longed-for refreshment, but it always proves false.

Here perhaps a utilitarian friend of mine may step forward to say, "Yes, death is a certainty, and it is inevitable, but is it not equally a certainty that we live and that we have the full right and capacity to enjoy this world? What is the use of getting scared at the thought of death, since it is sure and inevitable? Strike the iron while it is hot, enjoy the life while you have it, and never foolishly frighten yourself about what may take place in the future. Even Jesus says, 'Think not of the morrow, let the morrow take care of itself.' This shows that we should not waste our time in thinking about the future. Enjoy, O ye friends, enjoy, and allow others also to enjoy so that they may also allow you to enjoy. This is the highest philosophy. There can be no better path for a human being to follow."

My friend would be perfectly right, if enjoyment were the only one passion of our life. But, fortuna-

tely, that is not the case. Were it the case, what difference would there be between a man and an animal? An animal knows nothing more than eating and drinking; and if a man also does not know anything more than that, there would virtually be no difference between himself and an animal. But this is not actually so; a man is far higher than an animal inasmuch as he possesses a mind and an intellect which always crave after knowledge. Man cannot rest satisfied with pleasure only, but there is another innate tendency of his mind that always leads him to search after the truth of things. This is known as his hunger after knowledge. This distinguishes him from an animal, and raises him up to the level of God. Along with the idea of pleasure and pain, he has the idea of right and wrong, and he derives a sort of peculiar satisfaction in doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. Knowledge is power. By means of knowledge, he can know the art of acquiring longevity; and knowledge also helps him in his enjoyment of pleasure. This hunger after knowledge, therefore, does not allow him to rest satisfied with sensual enjoyments, but always urges him to know who he is, whence he is, and where he is to go. Urged by it, man questions: Am I really mortal? Do I end with the end of my life? Did I exist before my birth? And through a process of reasoning he finds out that he is neither the body, nor the life. When he sleeps soundly, although he does not do anything at the time, his life is in full play; that shows that his vital energies act independently of him, i. e., they are independent of and separate from him. When he is under the influence of chloroform, even if any portion of his body is mangled

and mutilated, he will know that only when the action of chloroform ceases and he returns to those injured parts. This shows that he is separate from his body. When he analyses his mind, he finds out that it is a bundle of thoughts and ideas, and when he analyses any of his thoughts or ideas, he finds out that no thought or idea can be possible independent of the body, as the contact of the body with the external world brings forth all our knowledge and experience, and our thoughts and ideas solely depend upon that knowledge for their existence. As such ideas depend upon the body for their existence. Hence his mind cannot be independent of the body. But he has proved that he is independent of the body, therefore he finds out that he is separate from his mind, even which cannot exist independent of the body. So his very mind proves to him that he is separate from his body, his life as well as his mind. Now, body and life are mortal, but he is neither the body nor the life; therefore he may not be mortal like them. And again when he considers that he is something beyond mind, he cannot but conclude himself to be changeless, change being the characteristic of the mind. And because he is changeless, he must therefore be immortal or deathless; for death means a sudden change in a certain course of affairs. In this way, reasoning shows him that he is immortal, that with the body he does not die, that with the changes in his body he does not change, and that because he is immortal and changeless, he must be eternal, and as such, he must have existed even before his coming in contact with his present body and life. He then finds out the truth in Sri Krishna's immortal teaching, when that great personage exhorts his friend

Arjuna in the following way: "It is not a fact that these kings, yourself as well as myself, did not exist (before this, our present birth), nor even is it a fact that all of us shall not exist after this life." The affirmation of the great master serves to corroborate his rational conclusion, and he feels that he existed, and shall exist eternally. Although apparently mortal when he identifies himself with his body, still he knows himself to be really immortal. He also arrives at this conclusion by studying his own nature. Every being wants to have whatever is natural to it, and hates and repudiates even the ideas of those things which are not natural to it. Every being naturally hates death. That shows that death is natural to no being, and therefore the opposite, deathlessness or immortality, is the nature of each and every one of living beings. Thus he finds out that his very nature shows him his immortality. It is the nature of the fish to live in water, and therefore water is what it loves most, and if it hates anything at all here, it is the very idea of going out of the water. In the same way, he finds out that because death is not his nature, therefore he hates it, and because immortality is his nature, therefore he loves it.

Another fact also confirms him in his conclusion, and that is this: It is the nature of man to be careful after an error is pointed out to him, and the next time he is less prone to commit such a mistake. No man commits the mistake over and over again, even if every time he is warned of it. He may commit the same mistake thrice or four times if he is exceptionally dull, but after repeated warnings he is sure to avoid that mistake. There is a saying that an intelligent or

a first class man learns only by hearing, a second class man learns by seeing, and a dull or a third class man learns by doing it himself after repeated failures. This shows that even a dull man learns to do a thing correctly at last. Except an exceptionally dull fellow, no one stumbles upon the same stone for more than four or five times. This is the nature of all human beings. But there is a strange case of exception with regard to this nature of his, and that is this. When Yudhishtira was asked by Dharma as to what was the most wonderful thing in the world, he answered that every day lots of beings go to the abode of death, and the rest, although they daily experience this fact, think they will live here for ever; what is more wonderful than this? Although he daily sees that his relatives, friends and neighbours take their last farewell from the world to go to the abode of death, from whose bourne no traveller ever returns, although he daily reads in the news papers about the several deaths all through the world, he completely forgets all that, and thinks and believes himself a permanent settler here. Although he is warned about the fact every day of his life, every day he commits the same mistake. This extraordinary nature of his, which clearly contradicts his ordinary nature, fully shows that he is naturally and essentially an immortal being, and therefore he cannot bring himself to believe that he is mortal at all, although he daily experiences mortality everywhere around him. Can a man ever think himself to be a woman although he is daily urged by others to believe himself to be one? By his very birth and nature he is a man, and how can he ever imagine himself to be

a woman at all, although the whole world testifies against his natural conviction? Similarly, because a human being is naturally immortal, it is impossible for him to think himself otherwise.

In this way he learns that he is immortal, that his life is not the short span between his birth and death, that the earth where he is destined to live only for a few years cannot be his home at all, and that it is merely a place of sojourn in his immortal and eternal career. And as a man can have no attachment to his place of sojourn, so he naturally loses all his attachment to the world. Looking at his eternal life, his ephemeral worldly life seems to him to be altogether insignificant. So long as a man studies about this earth of ours, and learns that its circumference is 25000 miles, and that it contains many countries of vast areas, many high, long mountain ranges, hundreds of broad and longwinding rivers, several lakes, oceans bigger than the continents, and innumerable wide expanses of land in it, it is but natural for him to think at the time what a big affair this earth of ours is. But when astronomy teaches him that this earth is only a planet, a mere satellite of the sun which is but a star, that there are innumerable clusters of stars bigger than the sun which itself is a satellite of another bigger star, and that the Universe is composed of an infinite number of such stars, the earth is then naturally left out of consideration. In the limitless ocean of the Universe, the earth then appears as a mere bubble. In the same way, when eternal life is considered, the small transient earthly life is almost overlooked at the time. The astronomers calculate the distances of the heavenly bodies by

assuming the earth as a mere point; similarly, the man who fully understands that his life is eternal, to him his transient earthly connection appears as insignificant. Earthly attractions cannot bind him at the time. They naturally fall off from him when the true knowledge of the Self makes its appearance in him, even as the petals of flowers fall off when the fruit grows. Thus getting free of all earthly bondages, man becomes a liberated soul or a Mukta-purusha; he conquers the earth and comes out a victor.

Here a question may be raised that if the overlooking of death and considering oneself as immortal constitute the sign of a liberated man, every man of the world is such a one. The worldly man never thinks of death at all; he enjoys life here like an immortal god. Why should he not be classed among liberated souls? To answer this, let us see whether he really thinks or believes himself immortal. No, that is not the case. He only forgets that he will have to die some day or other, simply because his mind is so much engrossed in the pursuit of pleasure that he has no time to think about the real state of affairs which he is in. Forgetfulness is not knowledge. They are two diametrically opposed things, and no mistake or forgetfulness can ever bring about any good result. If a man mistakes a snake for a rope and wants to pick it up, he is sure to die, being bitten by the snake. If a candidate for a certain post is wanted to answer certain questions before he is admitted to it, and if his answers are full of mistakes, then instead of getting the service, he will be rejected as a down-right fool by his superiors. And if he goes on committing such mistakes all his life, he is sure to lead a very miser-

able life; for no one will give him anything to eat, thinking him to be an altogether useless fellow. Mistake therefore always brings on disastrous results. How can it therefore produce any good result in the case of the man who mistakes an impermanent life for a permanent one, and then foolishly thinks the ephemeral connection with his wife and family to be eternal, who considers an atom to be a mountain and a mountain to be an atom? For it is not sane to think this limited and precarious life to be eternal and certain, forgetting the really eternal life altogether, of which the earthly life is but an extremely minute fraction. And is not this the case with all worldly people? So we must not confound such a man with a liberated soul. We have seen that human life is a constant struggle, and that man finds a peculiar pleasure in such struggles. But the very fact of his struggling shows that he is not satisfied with the condition of his world, however affluent and happy he may appear to be. Even the extremely worldly man, although he is perfectly satisfied with his life, has his daily struggle to appease his hunger and thirst, his passions and appetites. Man struggles to get rest. Because hunger makes him restless, he toils and gets some food, taking which he regains his much desired rest, although that is for a very short time. This we can understand very easily, for we have already seen that the soul of man by nature is one eternal and changeless entity which tries to assert itself in this changeful worldly life. That is the reason why every man wants and struggles for rest, as the state of rest is a changeless one. We have also seen that the attempt of men to make this earth full of bliss proves always fruitless. So also we

have seen that all attempts to know anything about the mystery of creation is also foolish, inasmuch as creation is infinite and eternal while man's life and intellect are very limited and ephemeral. When a man considers all these things properly his desire for worldly knowledge vanishes, and he desires to know who he really is. He detects the falsity of worldliness and repudiates it. He no longer wants to remain ignorant of himself. He feels a necessity for this higher knowledge, and that leads him to seek the help of religion which promises to illumine him on the subject. So we see that the necessity of religion is felt only by people who have learnt to see the world rightly, and who are not therefore liable to commit any mistake. The extremely worldly as well as the utilitarians cannot comprehend the necessity of religion; for the world has many things to interest them, which they fondly cherish as their home—sweet home. But as we have seen, that mistake can never bring about any good result; it should be the bounden duty of all men, whether they be worldly or godly, to do away with it as much as possible. Disease of the mind should not be harboured on any account, because it makes a weak and emaciated person think himself very strong and stout. The patient must be given proper medicine to dispel the mistake from him, although he may not find the necessity of taking any medicine at all. Similarly, although a worldly man may not find any necessity for religion, he should be made to imbibe religion; for only then he will cease to have this mistaken notion about the world and cease to clasp it, a veritable snake, to his bosom, thinking it to be a fine-looking garland; only then he will see

things as they are, get rid of all wordly bondages and effect his freedom, after knowing the mirage like unsubstantiality of the world. Thus we have seen that religion is necessary for all, for the foolish as well as the wise, and what is religion? Religion is that which enables us to know who we are; it is the loving, unselfish and kind guide that takes us by the hand and leads us to the throne of Truth; and innumerable are the paths through which it leads us thither. One of those paths we have already described, namely, the path of reasoning or Jnana-marga, going through which we learn that we are not changing and ephemeral like the body but eternal and changeless entities, without birth and death, that the world is not a proper home for us but merely a place of our sojourn. There is another path which is subdivided into innumerable different paths, and which is called the path of love or Bhakti-marga. Let us see what Bhakti-marga is, how through it, religion takes us to our goal, as well as what that goal is. Studying ourselves, we find that we are intelligent beings and that intelligence is manifested in harmony, law and order. In a house where everything is in a chaotic state or confusion—say, chair is there where a tub should be, the table is put upturned with legs pointing to the skies, the pillow lies in the kitchen while the bedding is scattered in all directions all over the compound—we at once conclude that no intelligent being has been living there for a long time. The house has been uninhabited by man. On the other hand, where there is order and arrangement, although no man is visible there, we conclude that a man had been surely living there, otherwise how can there be such nice arrangement everywhere? So

wherever there is law, order and arrangement, we are forced to conclude that there must be an intelligent being behind it. This being the case, when we look into this world and find there everything regulated by eternal laws—winter following summer and day following night with unerring precision, the wants and necessities of every season being exactly met by the timely useful production of fauna and flora—we cannot but conclude that an intelligent power remains always behind creation to regulate and direct it. Looking at the workings of that Being, we cannot but conclude Him to be an all-intelligent and all-merciful power who is always engaged in supplying all our wants so as to make us as comfortable as possible. Hence we are forced to call Him our real father and real mother. As creation is eternal, Creator must also be eternal, and since it requires an infinite amount of power to regulate, order and arrange the infinite number of worlds, He must necessarily be an all-powerful, all-intelligent, all-knowing, all-merciful, all-loving and all-good father and mother in one. The dull, dead material world falls down, and God rises in its stead to plunge the victor man in eternal bliss.

Whoever loves us, looks after our comfort and welfare, him we are all forced to love, love being always mutual. And when we consider the infinite loving kindness of God towards us, when we regard Him as our real father and mother, can it be possible for us not to love Him? Thus the moment man recognises God in the creation, he loses himself in His love and becomes enjoyment itself; all other lower and human attachments and loves are completely thrown into shade when Divine love shines in him, even as the

moon and stars are all thrown into shade and obscured when the glorious sun rises. This is called Bhakti Yoga or the path of love. Because every individual has different tastes and tendencies from those of others, God is viewed by every man in his own light, and He being all-powerful, it is very easy for Him to fulfil the desire of all. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, "Whoever wants to see Me in whatever light or form, I readily fulfil his desire, O thou son of Pritha; all people travel through paths chalked out by Me alone." This clearly shows that the paths of religion must necessarily be many, even as many as there are men in the world. Principally these are divided into the five great religions of the world, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Muhammadanism. All these are subdivided into several other paths, and these subdivisions are also divided and so on. As we have seen, there is no end to these divisions, which are as natural as the various characteristics and tendencies and tastes of men. The good, intelligent and right-seeing men can alone know that these differences in religious views are not only inevitable but necessary also, and therefore they can have no quarrel with men professing altogether different faiths from what they profess. They know that others are seeing the same God in their own different religions, and therefore they do not grumble at their manners and customs, rites and ceremonies, dogmas and faiths. They hold with Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna that as the same water is drunk by different people, one calling it *Pani*, a second calling it *Tannir*, a third calling it *Jalam*, a fourth calling it *Aqua* and so on, the differences in the name in no way altering the property of water with which

every one slakes his thirst, similarly one and the same God is worshipped by some as Isvara, by some as Allah by some as God, by some as Jehova and so on, the differences in name having no power to alter Him in any way, as each one of them gets in Him the much longed-for peace and rest for which he has been struggling. A rose called by another name smells as sweet as before; for the rose is always a rose, by whatever name it may be called. So God, by whatever name He be called, is good and great; for no amount of naming can change Him. As a roof can be reached by means of a rope, or a ladder, or stair-case, or a bamboo, similary God can bereached through the several paths, and each religion is one such path. People who think in this way can have no quarrel with any religion whatever. Because they know that Siva, Vishnu, Sakti, Allah and Jehova denote the same eternal being who is God, therefore, although they are Vaishnavites they allow others to call and worship the same Vishnu as Siva or Sakti or Allah. This does not show that they are Vaishnavites, Saivaites, Saktas, Christians and Mohammedans at the same time. Their attitude towards them is just like that of a daughter-in-law in a family, who, although she fully and freely associates with her husband, and loves him more than her own self, still does not hate her father-in-law, mother in-law, brother-in-law, her own father, mother and brothers on that account but loves and reveres all of them,—her special love and care, however, being reserved for her own dear husband alone, to whom she opens her heart, and whom she knows as her earthly God, and at whose feet she dedicates herself. These people similarly revere and love other religions, but

their special love and veneration flow freely to their own dear religion at whose altar they have sacrificed themselves. Fanaticism, bigotry and narrowness can have no place in them; these they know only to be the outcome of sheer ignorance that blinds the eye of men and does not allow them to see that the same God is worshipped under different forms in different religions. This shows that a fanatic must necessarily be an intolerant person, and consequently he is always extremely quarrelsome, and as a quarrelsome man can have no peace on earth, he indeed leads a very miserable life. The religion which such a man professes is therefore no religion at all but is rather irreligion, and we have seen that no true religion ever leads a man astray from the peace and happiness that flows from the throne of Truth.

My dear friends, let us therefore be particularly careful not to mistake irreligion for religion, and as true religion should be courted with all zeal and fervour, irreligion in the garb of religion should be carefully eschewed and repudiated with all energy and care. The one characteristic of irreligion is its narrowness and intolerance, and wherever you find these qualities, know-it to be far away from the abode of peace, although the garb of it may be blazoned and paraded in full prominence in the form of Tripundrams, or of crosses, or of big and massive temples yoked to an immense amount of wealth and power. As religion is our best friend, irreligion is our worst enemy, and no good and wise man will harbour such an enemy in his bosom. If you want to have real bliss, give up vain fretting and fuming, and instead of criticising others criticise your own self, and try to eradicate

whatever evil there is in you, and thus becoming pure and spotless, at last be perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect. This is what is called true religion and can there be any question as to the necessity of such religion?

Always mixing with the world and identifying ourselves with the body, we are prone to forget religion which awakens us to the real state of affairs which we are in, and opens to us the gate of eternal bliss, and keeps us away from being drawn down to the object life of beasts, doing nothing but eating and drinking and making merry. Such being the case, there must be something that will occasionally remind us as to who we are, and what we should do, so that we may not be altogether forgetful of our duties here. It is religion that fulfils this purpose.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS MISSION

THE CHILD of Nature, fashioned by God's own hand, as it were, like Adam before his fall, Sri Ramakrishna incomparably combined in himself the sweetly amiable, and divinely naive nature of Sri Rama, with the keen sagacity and profound wisdom of Sri Krishna. He began his all-purifying, all-gracious and all-comforting godly career, more than a decade and a half before the middle of the nineteenth century (1833), carrying with him the holy mission of universal love and sympathy, as well as peace and blessings for all humanity. Born of an orthodox brahmin family, in a certain wayside village of Bengal named Sri Kamarpukur, bred by a father who was extremely rigid in all his pious observances and scrupulously particular about his high caste, it would have been but natural for him to turn out to be a religious aristocrat; but, as "the child is father of the man", the future teacher of universal tolerance, sympathy and love showed as a boy all these godly characteristics more than those which were transmitted to him through heredity. He was the leader of a band of little playmates who were of many castes, from the highest to the lowest, with all of whom he used to go to the neighbouring mango grove covering a large tract of land only about a furlong and a half from his house, and there like the cowherd boys of Sri Brindavan, they played their innocent plays of childhood, when all caste distinctions being unknown, they felt themselves as the different

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limbs of one body, of which Gadadhara (Sri Ramakrishna's name in boyhood) was the head and heart.

Let us try to have some glimpses of this singular individual when he was a child. That childhood is extremely impressionable and perfectly retentive in nature, is best borne out by the fact that during the first two or three years of its life the little child retains almost a whole language in its memory and the impressions which it then receives are its life-long companions. Moreover, being filled with an exuberance of vigour and life, it imbues the whole universe also with that vitality, and thus lives and moves amidst an environment of living and conscious entities, unlike its grown-up self to which the world becomes partly animate and partly inanimate, and hence more prosaic. How a dry leaf, fluttering and moving from one place to another in a breeze sometimes gets a scolding from such little cherubs for not keeping quiet and behaving properly; how sometimes, one of those little angels, bestriding a stick regards it as a real horse, and such is the strength of his imagination that he finds even more pleasure in riding on it than a thoroughbred equestrian finds in riding his actual horse: he will tend it with all the zeal of a horseman, now taking it to the pond to make it drink water feeling it to be thirsty, or giving it fodder thinking it to be hungry, sometimes petting and caressing it or sometimes whipping it to bring it to order; these are facts very well known to all of us. The child moves in the world of reality. To it everything is serious. What we regard as toys and trifles, to it are the most serious affairs. Human life begins with such seriousness. The child is always happy, because the damping and debasing

spirit of *Nil admirari* has not yet taken possession of its infant soul and it has not learned to regard anything as trifling and insignificant. It can thus be pleased with those things which appear to us to be most commonplace and uninteresting. How happy is that period of our life ! Conscious of its weakness, it is naturally prone to ask help from others, and since everything is real and living to it, it asks help from all, animate or inanimate, friend or foe, high or low, good or bad, such distinctions not yet having taken possession of its universally sympathetic soul. As it has not yet tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, for Satan has not yet succeeded in tempting this Divine Adam or Eve, it directly communicates with God every moment of its life and draws all its inspiration from that universal source. Can such a holy being be anything short of an angel ? Thus it is always merged in the Bliss Divine and becomes a source of pleasure even to those who merely glance at it.

Such is childhood. And the child of whom we are going to have some glimpses had those divine characteristics in an extraordinary degree as we are shortly to learn from the incidents connected with this portion of his life.

Bengal, from very ancient days, has been the home of strolling players, who go to play from village to village, if only a moderate sum is paid to them and whose themes are always connected with some of the incidents mentioned either in Ramayana, Mahabharata or any of the eighteen Puranas. Music is the principal attraction in all these theatrical performances. In dramatic representations, and pantomimic shows, they only take the second place. However, these latter

have the greatest charm for the young generations. Thus it is clear that through the performances of these strolling players, which are couched in the most popular language, young and old, although they may be illiterate, get a fair knowledge of all the holy anecdotes of their scriptures. Every village boy is acquainted with the lives of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and the five Pandavas. The managers of these theatres themselves take the leading parts in the performances, and when some of them happen to be real devotees, the effect which they create in the minds of their audience leaves a lasting impression. Such people are, therefore, very popular and their influence on the naturally impressionable and highly imaginative minds of young boys, is also very great. As long as the performance lasts the juvenile hearers live in real Brindavan, Ayodhya, Indraprastha, or Hastinapura. They carry the impressions, thus produced, through their life. Young Ramakrishna always used to be present whenever any such performance took place either in his village or any neighbouring one. Along with his highly imaginative and impressionable nature, he had a very strong and retentive memory, so it was but natural for him to retain whole pieces in his memory.

The sun was shining brilliantly upon a grazing herd of cattle totally unmindful of the beautiful scenery around that was resounding with the shrill and sweet voices of two rival cuckoos, and sweetly perfumed by the fresh-blown mango flowers from the neighbouring grove. A group of merry little boys was to be seen eating luncheon beneath one of these big and shady trees with spreading boughs. Some of them were dancing, some hallooing, and some playfully rob-

bing the luncheon of others, to be robbed in their turn, and thus the whole scene appeared like a perfect Arcadia. The boys were of all castes, and amongst them was Sri Ramakrishna, giving them a beautiful song. Suddenly he stopped and asked his companions to perform the play which they had lately heard in the neighbouring village, representing the feelings of the cowherd girls when they were separated from Sri Krishna who was then living in Mathura. The party at once consented. Young Ramakrishna became Radha, and others took the parts of her attendant maids, one of whom was called Brinda. Radha, in the anguish of separation from her Beloved was restless and her attendants feared that it might cost her her life even; so they deputed Brinda to go to Sri Krishna and tell him about the wretched plight to which she had been reduced. Before starting, Brinda asked Radha what she had to tell Sri Krishna and the latter not being able to tell anything, simply uttered the name of her lover, and fell into a swoon. At this stage the theatre suddenly broke up, for Sri Ramakrishna actually fell down senseless, tears trickling from his eyes and indistinct names of Sri Krishna coming out from his lips, till that also ceased.

As has been pointed out, this child had an extraordinarily impressionable nature, and when he was playing the part of Radha, he was so much impressed with the sentiment of love towards Sri Krishna, and felt the pang of separation so keenly, that he actually forgot it to be a mere play. He was living in real Brindavan, in the capacity of real Radha and thus how could he live for a moment without his beloved? The surrounding scenery too contributed much to waft

him up to that blessed land where Nature always sits as a beautiful queen upon her verdant throne of eternal spring. His poetic turn of mind was so much impressed with the beautiful representations of Sri Brindavan and the melting incidents connected therewith, made by the strolling players, and rural narrators of Puranic stories, that he lived, moved, and had his being, as it were, in that blessed land the greater part of his life, just as John Bunyan is said to have been constantly living and moving in an apocalyptical atmosphere. The lightest suggestion could at once bring out the hidden fire and then he would forget where he was, entirely breathing at that moment the healthy and hilarious atmosphere of rural Brindavan. In most cases, this forgetfulness amounted to total unconsciousness of the environments, and the result was that he would fall down in a swoon. Thus people took him to be subject to epileptic fits, not being able to comprehend the profundity of his mind.

Unmindful in great measure of the world around, it was natural for him to have a liking for Sannyasins, who are similarly unconcerned with their surroundings. Once his mother presented him with a new cloth, and dressing himself in that, he went to pay his respects to the Sadhus, who on their way to Jagannath, had that day become the guests of the rich landlords of the place, the Laha family. Seeing them attired in small strips of cloth, he had also a fancy to dress himself in that fashion, so he tore his new cloth into pieces and selected two out of them. Attiring himself with them, he appeared before his mother, asking her to see how he had become a Sannyasin. Of course, the

mother was very much annoyed at this, as no mother ever wants to imagine her darling going away from her to the hills and jungles to lead a precarious life by begging from door to door. He was rebuked for this rash behaviour, and then coaxed and caressed by her with redoubled fondness and fervour.

As he was very amiable and beautiful to look at in his childhood, he was a darling to the fair sex of almost all the families of the village. They loved to entertain him with nice dainties whenever he used to make his appearance before any of them. Even some wealthy old pious men, such as Mr. Manick Bannerji and Mr. Dharmadas Laha regarded him as a divine being, because of his natural love towards God, which indeed was much more than was to be expected in so young a child. People of his own family looked upon him with some regard, which in modern language may be styled as superstitious, because with his birth, poverty left the family which enjoyed competency ever afterwards.

Sri Ramakrishna was now five years of age. His father wanted to send him to the village school, kept by a pedagogue. Accordingly he was admitted there. Within a very short time he made friends with all his school fellows with whom, after the close of the school, he used to play and sing with his sweet voice those songs which he had learned from the strolling players, and thus he attracted their hearts towards him. They always loved to hear him sing, and used to perform together some pieces they had lately heard. They indeed were very happy in having Sri Gadadhara as their companion. When, in a few days, it was known by all his schoolmates that he could sing

and recite well, the news also reached the pedagogue's ear who one day after the end of the school hours asked him to sing. He did so, and it was so charming, that every day thereafter the teacher would not leave him without hearing a song or two from his sweet voice. Thus he became the darling of his master who never scolded him for being unmindful of his lessons. His literary attainments in consequence extended to a child's primer only and his mathematical knowledge only to simple addition. The first primer in village schools, before the introduction of modern system was called Sisubodha, in which, after learning the alphabet, the boy was made to read the story of charitable Karna, the life of Prahlada etc., written all in poetry. Prose writing in Bengal is a later introduction, first brought into vogue by Christian missionaries. Nowadays Bengal has a very grand literature in prose, but sixty years back prose was not so highly honoured as now, and people in the villages stuck to the old style, even though in cities like Calcutta primers in prose were used for the boys according to the English method. Gadadhara had a great fancy for the life of the boy devotee Prahlada and he would read it with great fervour before an appreciative audience often and often. There was in the village a person, named Madhoo, a weaver by caste, who loved to hear Gadadhara read about Prahlada; so after the close of his school Madhoo used to take him to his own house and make him read the life for the edification of himself and many illiterate men and women, who used to collect round the young reader whenever he opened his book there. He was seven years of age at the time.

The father now left this world, leaving the charge of the family upon Ramakumar, his eldest child. A year or two passed away, then the time came for Gadadhara to be invested with the holy thread, and initiated into the mysteries of the religion of a Brahmana. The boy should choose a lady of whom he should beg first as his God-mother, that being the custom. To choose her from the Brahmana caste is the duty of a respectable brahmin boy especially in the case of Gadadhara, as his family was known to be the most orthodox. But Gadadhara preferred to choose a pious blacksmith's widow, named Dhani, as his God-mother, at which every member of his family protested. But the young boy would have his own way, for his universal nature revolted against the idea of looking down upon a really pious, and honest lady, simply because she was of low caste, and regarding every Brahmana as an incarnation of piety and purity although he might behave even worse than a pariah. His appreciative nature was always ready to recognise true merit wherever it was to be found and so is it strange that he should have a great liking to give precedence in offering *Bhiksha* to this pious lady? People are everywhere caste-ridden, not only here in India, but all over the world, the difference being that here caste is sanctioned by religion, and in other lands it is regulated by the natural likings and dislikings of man who always regards leniently the misdoings of relatives and the rich, and partly by social customs. Oftentimes the real merit is overlooked, because the man or the woman happens to be born of a low caste, although in the long run, goodness triumphs; as is evinced by the Brahmana's worshipping the pariah saints here in

South India. It is clear nevertheless that the caste-ridden men of the world are always very slow to recognise merit in a man of lower caste, but true and sterling merit will shine of itself, in spite of its having been overlooked at first. A broad and universal heart like that of Sri Ramakrishna, however, could not help recognising goodness wherever it was found. So although his relatives and friends all combined against his choosing Dhani as his God-mother, he was inexorable. He shut himself up in a room and did not take his meal almost for a whole day, till his second brother, Rameswara, promised that he should have his will, even to the detriment of the prestige of the family which had been enjoying the unsullied reputation of being the purest and most orthodox family of the place. Sri Ramakrishna was satisfied, and came out of his closet. He was invested with his holy thread and Dhani became his God-mother.

During funeral ceremonies, it is a custom in Bengal to invite together the learned men of the surrounding places in a meeting hall to hold discussions on religious subjects. Once when such a meeting was held in the mansions of the Laha family Sri Gadadhara, like young Jesus, discussed with the wise men in such a way, that they all admired and blessed him saying, "This extraordinary child will turn out to be an extraordinary man hereafter." So he was looked upon as a precocious and promising young boy by almost all the people of the village some of whom used to regard him as more than human. One illiterate shell cutter, by name Chinna (Srinivasa), sometimes used to take him to a solitary place to worship him with flowers and other offerings such as, sweet-

meats, etc., and the simple man actually used to weep before him in true devotion, finding in him, as it were, his ideal God! By this we can understand the influence which he unconsciously used to exercise around him even in his boyhood.

Among his several boyish pastimes I will mention here two more. He was a very good artist, and could form such nice images out of clay, that they actually fetched him money when exhibited in the market. He used to spend that money in entertaining his poor playmates. That his natural gift in this direction was not of a common kind may be easily understood by the fact that even the veteran painters, clay-moulders and other artists used to take his opinion about the correctness of their paintings and images.

He had a great imitative power and could copy every movement of any man or woman. When he used to attire himself in a female dress, none could detect him. Even his own girl-playmates could not recognize him when disguised as one of them he would come to talk with them. How wonderingly they would look at him when he would reveal his true self to them! He used to enjoy the fun very much. In this way he endeared himself to all men and women.

We have already said that his literary attainments were of a very rudimentary character. When he was seventeen years of age, i.e., in the year 1853, he copied a portion of the Yuddhakanda of the Bengali Ramayanam written by Krittibasa, wherein the date of its completion has been mentioned, which is the 19th of Ashadha of the Sana, 1256. The copy is being carefully preserved in the Belur monastery (near Calcutta) which is now under the presidency of Swami Brahma-

nandaji. It is written neatly in the round-hand of a boy, without much care being paid to the correctness of the orthography. By this even a superficial observer can judge of his literary merits.

During this period of his life he used to learn wrestling, and with his supple limbs he could assume any posture he liked to the astonishment of the bystanders. He could easily take most of the eighty kinds of postures which the Hathayogis struggle and practise so much to assume.

He was nineteen years of age when his brother Ramakumar, who was a profound Sanskrit scholar and who had a 'tol' or free school in Jhamapukur of Calcutta, wrote a letter to him from the metropolis asking him to come over there. Although Ramakumar was poor, he did not take any fee from his students, as it is regarded by all the orthodox scholars of the old school a sin to sell knowledge.

From what has been already said, it is clear that Sri Ramakrishna was little indebted, if at all, to any human being for his education. His mental development came naturally; and if any one could claim to have been his teacher, it was Nature herself. He was a minute observer of human nature. Mixing with all classes of people, he knew the characteristics of all, keeping his own individuality intact. This wide experience was useful to him in his latter days by supplying him with ample materials for his everappealing, impressive and beautiful parables, illustrations and sayings. The world in which he lived was always beautiful like Sri Brindavan, for it reflected his own pure heart wherein the divine shepherd made his permanent residence. So his coming away from Kamarpukur

to Calcutta may be compared to Sri Krishna's departure from Gokula to Mathura. When his brother wrote him to come to Calcutta, he had a two-fold motive, one to give him some Sanskrit education, which he had been altogether neglecting and the other, to make him a useful member of the family by finding an appointment for him. Sri Ramakrishna always respected his eldest brother, and so, on the receipt of the letter, he started for Calcutta where altogether a new scene and a new field of action was opened to him. He came out of the lap of Nature, to see the false imitations of art; but as he had too much of the former in him, the latter could not deceive him by her false glamour, and his optimistic nature gave way a little, as he could not be pleased with seeming beauty and bliss. Although he was not in the habit of confining himself to books, in obedience to his brother's desire he began to read the first Sanskrit grammar with him. This he continued for a few days. Once when he was sitting alone in the veranda of his room, he saw a man well-versed in Nyaya and Mimamsa, whom he had known before, carrying something in a napkin and through familiarity he asked the pandit what he was carrying in his cloth. Being answered that it was a little rice and green banana which he had earned from the neighbouring mansion by performing the priest's function there, Sri Ramakrishna at once began to reflect, that if so much learning could bring nothing better than such a trifle, what was the necessity of taking so much trouble in getting by heart all the difficult aphorisms of grammar, logic etc., till a man becomes old? Did not the common porter of the street earn his daily bread, although he

might not know to read a single letter ? He would not have such knowledge. It was not worth a pie and from that moment he gave up all idea of pursuing his studies. Next day his brother asked the reason of his not studying the grammar as usual, and when he explained Ramakumar laughed at him, thinking him a foolish young lad ; for it was, and still is, a notion amongst all learned scholars, that knowledge is merely an intellectual pastime and it is not necessary that every one should follow the teachings of the sages who want us to regard the world as false and Brahman alone as real. So it was natural for Ramakumar to take him to be an inexperienced boy who knew little about the world, but who would only learn from further experience. He asked him to give up all his wild views and continue his studies, but Sri Ramakrishna told him decidedly that he was not going to learn what could never take him beyond all wants, and that he would try to get such knowledge, knowing which, all his physical, mental and spiritual wants would leave him once for all. Ramakumar laughed still more, but as he was a loving and very good brother, he did not press his request very much and allowed him to have his will for some time, believing that time itself would teach him a better lesson.

Sri Ramakrishna was now left free. He used to go occasionally to Mr. Digambar Mitra's big mansion in the neighbourhood with his brother who was honoured and patronised by Mr. Mitra and many other wealthy people of the place on account of his excellent character and profound scholarship. The sweet voice and amiable character of Sri Ramakrishna at once made him a favourite of all the members of

Mitra's family, and especially the ladies who loved to hear him sing his devotional songs often and often. The spirit of Kamarpukur began to revive a little.

There was a very wealthy lady at Janbazaar, Calcutta, named Rani Rasmani, who was famous for her keen intellect, sagacity and piety. She wanted to dedicate a temple to the Goddess Kali; so she purchased a big plot of land on the Ganges at Dakshineswar, a village about four miles north of Calcutta. Although she was born of a low caste, she desired that good Brahmanas should help her in this noble undertaking by accepting her gifts and becoming priests to the Goddess. With this intention she sent men to different centres of learning in and outside the metropolis, to ask the opinions of the learned Pandits about her project, and she was puzzled to find that each and every one of them told her that as she was a sudra lady, she could not expect good Brahmanas to partake in the intended ceremony and festival. She was really disgusted and did not know what to do. At last she came across Ramakumar and asked his opinion about it and he after deep deliberation asked her to write down the property in the name of her Guru who was a Brahmana, and all the difficulties would thus be removed. For in that case the property having belonged to a twice-born, no good Brahmana should have any objection to partake in the festival. This pleased the Rani exceedingly and she immediately did as she was advised. The property which cost her more than twelve lakhs of rupees was written in her Guru's name.

It was on the day of the bathing festival of Sri Jagannath in the year 1855, that the inaugural ceremony began, and one of the biggest temples, which had

been built on the spacious land, was formally dedicated to the Mother of the Universe, the Goddess Kali. Innumerable men and women flocked from all directions and were sumptuously entertained, but the orthodox Brahmins refrained from coming there, although there was no good reason for their behaving so except the social custom. As no other Brahmin sympathised with her, Ramakumar was requested to be the high priest to the Goddess and he readily agreed. His brother followed him on the inauguration day, and amongst all the feastings he alone remained fasting, not liking to partake of a sudra's food; and he appeased his hunger by taking a quarter anna worth of popped rice in the evening. It was as if the hereditary orthodoxy made its appearance for the first time although only to die after a while. When the ceremony was over he expressed his sorrow at his brother's accepting the service of a sudra. But when Ramakumar quoted several passages from the scriptures to show that he was all right, Sri Ramakrishna was perfectly satisfied, and began to take his meals there along with him.

Many Brahmins at home criticised Ramakumar for accepting the service of a sudra, and when Ramakrishna returned home after a few days, they all began to shower their invectives against the indiscreet and improper action of his brother. He heard all this but kept silence, perfectly at peace within himself as to his brother's unimpeachable conduct. After staying for a few days at home, during which he paid a visit to his nephew, Hridaya, at Sihar, a village five miles from his own, he returned to Dakshineswar and stayed with Ramakumar.

One day he took a little clay from the bank of the holy Ganges and fashioned such a beautiful image of Siva riding on a bull out of it, that it attracted the admiration of all the people who saw it. Mathuranath Biswas, the son-in-law of Rani Rasmani and the manager of her estate, was walking up and down the garden at the time. He also saw the beautiful image and was so much charmed by it, that he at once wanted to know who the artist was. On its being said that the younger brother of his high priest had done this, he at once wanted to see him, and requested Ramakumar to bring his artist brother to him.

As soon as Mathuranath saw Sri Ramakrishna he was so charmed by his sweet personality that he desired to employ him as a priest along with his brother and an opportunity soon presented itself.

By the side of Kali's temple, there is a Vishnu-mandira in the same compound and a Brahmana was employed as the worshipper of the God. Through his carelessness, he one day broke the leg of the image, and a great commotion took place throughout the temple precincts. The news also reached the Rani at Janbazaar. She was sorely displeased with the carelessness of her priest, and did not know what to do with the broken image. She asked the advice of many pandits who unanimously told her to throw it away and replace it by a new one. Sri Ramakrishna's opinion was also sought and he simply asked the Rani to enquire of the Pandits how they would advise a lady if her husband's leg got broken or fractured. Would they advise her to throw him away, or keep him under the treatment of a good doctor until he got completely cured? Of course, the wise men had to give preference

to the latter procedure, at which Sri Ramakrishna asked the Rani if, in worshipping the holy image, she had been worshipping her real husband, or merely an idol. The sagacious Rani at once understood the force of his argument, and asked him to cure the broken limb of her husband, having heard of him previously as a skilful natural artist. He mended the broken limb in such a way that none could detect that it had been broken at all. The Rani was very much pleased at all this, and she requested him to be employed as a permanent worshipper of the God, to which he said he would consent provided his nephew Hridaya be allowed to live with him in the temple. The Rani at once complied and Sri Ramakrishna was employed as a priest of the Vishnu temple, while Hridaya became an adorer of Kali's holy person. Within six months, however, the former was transferred to Kali's temple and Ramakumar had to take charge of Vishnumandiram. When Mother Kali was put under Sri Ramakrishna's care, a great spiritual storm was gradually beginning to gather strength within him. He was naturally fond of his Mother Goddess, and when at Kamarpukur, he had been in the habit of worshipping Her with his play-fellows; that had been one of the several favourite plays of his boyhood; now he had Her actually before him, as his own dearly beloved Eternal Mother. It was no longer a play, but a serious affair to him. His joy knew no bounds at first. Early in the morning he used to rise up from his bed, take a flower-basket in his hand, and gather the choicest flowers from the spacious garden surrounding the big temple. He would make the most beautiful garland out of them, and adorn his Beloved

Mother with it. When he sat down to worship, he knew not when to stop; such was also the case, when he waved the holy light before the Goddess. To him She was not a stone image, but a living Mother, and could a loving and dutiful child like him feel anything but intense bliss in Her sweet company? He used to sing songs to Her, songs that had flowed out of the pure heart of a former saintly and beloved child of Hers, Ramaprasad, so that She might be pleased with them. Every moment of his life passed in the thought of how to please Her. Sleep forsook him in the night, when his mind tried to devise the best way of worshipping his beloved One. If the day were a little hot, he would stand by Her side fanning for hours together. He used to prepare betel leaves with finely cut nuts, in the most exquisite manner, so that his Mother might be perfectly pleased in chewing them. For the first few months he forgot all about himself and was filled with his Divine Mother. When he sat down to meditate upon Her, space and time were completely overlooked, and he used to lose himself in Her.

His brother Rameswar got frightened at all this, and thought he might run mad, if he went on in this strain. So he sent him home to be married after finding out a suitable bride for him. He was duly married to a girl of five, named Srimati Saradamani Devi and stayed in his native place for a few days, and then came back to Dakshineswar. He was at that time aged twenty-three. After his return, he wanted to commune with his Mother more deeply. For this reason he wanted an enclosed and solitary place. On the northern side of the big garden there was a vast banyan tree

covering a large plot of ground which during those days remained almost unfrequented by men, and was called *Panchavati*. He wanted to have an enclosed place near it where he could safely meditate unmolested by any, but as he was very shy he did not make his intention known to any one, although he desired it very much. He was sitting one day at this time under the shade of the big banyan tree, facing the Ganges, which was then in its full tide, when he saw a bundle suddenly thrown over the bank by the rushing waves. There was a gardener working nearby. He asked him to see what the bundle contained and when it was untied, to his astonishment he found all the necessities for fencing an enclosure, such as bamboo, woods of equal length, a big bundle of rope, and even a knife. He asked the gardener, who had a great regard for him, to enclose with a fence the plot he had already planted with *tulasi* and the good man readily complied with his request. Every night he used to come there to meditate and experience the transcendental conceptions of a *yogi*, as described in the *Svetasvataropani-shad* (II, 11).

"Before a man realizes Brahman he experiences these visions within himself, viz., smoke, fog, wind, fire, firefly, lightning, crystal, lunar and solar lights." Within a very short time he realised the highest perfection of Yoga by becoming one with Brahman, transcending all these visions, for nothing could be difficult for an ardent spirit like his. During this period he first saw a vision of a most beautiful girl whom he came to know as Sita, the devoted consort of Sri Ramachandra. The sweet damsel came before him smiling and asked him what he wanted, for She was ready to

give him whatever he desired. Sri Ramakrishna asked nothing but true devotion towards Herself who was the Mother of the whole universe. At this Sita was exceedingly pleased and presently merged into him. Referring to the miserable condition of his body, in later days the great sage used to tell us that because he had first seen Sita whose whole life was almost a life of misery he also had to fare no better than She.

After this he had many visions of Gods and Goddesses, all of whom used to lose themselves in him. His daily worship of Kali used to be conducted with more fervour and devotion during these days. He was more impatient to talk with Her, to see Her take food from his own hand. He wanted to put life into the stone image of the Goddess and make Her move, and talk, and play with him as a 'living Mother, for he thought, was She not the all powerful Creator of the Universe? Then why should She not grant him this favour? Was it too much for Her who could create and destroy all in a moment? Had She not previously revealed Herself to Her fortunate devotees, such as Ramaprasad and others? Why in his case should She remain silent? Was there any defect in his devotion towards Her? Why did She not point it out to him then? Thus he used to question Her, while streams of tears would flow from his eyes. Not being able to bear separation from Her, he would sometimes beat his head against the ground and rub his mouth upon it till blood used to come from the wounded parts. In the madness of desperation once he snatched the sword from Her hand and wanted to kill himself with it, when the charming figure of the Divine Mother appeared before him and sweetly consoled him saying, "My

dear child, I will come to thee whenever thou wilt call me." At this the terrible storm within him ceased.

When his intense zeal to see his Mother made him so mad, not being able to understand the profundity of his devotion, the temple people used to tell all sorts of stories against him to the Rani and Mathuranath, both of whom had fortunately more sense to appreciate him. So the tale bearers could not injure him any way. But he used to be so much out of himself that it was found altogether impossible for him to carry on the temple worship systematically. In going to worship the Mother, sometimes he would place the flowers upon his own head, not knowing himself to be in any way separate from Her. Sometimes realising Her to be permeating all living organisms, he would feed cats and crows with the offering intended for the Goddess. These were indeed acts of extreme sacrilegiousness in the eyes of superficial observers ; and so Mathuranath employed Haladhari, his cousin, as the priest, and allowed Sri Ramakrishna to do whatever he liked. Thus being free, Sri Ramakrishna's devotion towards the Goddess Mother increased a thousand-fold. For days and nights he used to stay beyond the plane of his senses, and his loving nephew Hridaya tried his best to make him eat a few mouthfuls of food every day. But some days he could not succeed in making him swallow even a single mouthful, so fully unconscious he used to be of his environments. Before his realization of the Divine glory, his restlessness was such as cannot be described. His brain used to burn with a peculiar kind of unbearable heat, to cool down which he used to apply the cold mud of the Ganges to his head for hours.

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The second brother Rameswara was living at home to look after the domestic affairs, so Ramakrishna was left without a guardian except his faithful nephew and attendant Hridaya, who loved him with intense devotion, followed him everywhere like a shadow and but for whom the preservation of his body would have been impossible. This we have heard from his own mouth. So can we be too grateful to Hridaya who served him with unstinted devotion for thirty years?

That Sri Ramakrishna always required a man to look after and watch him, can be easily gathered from the facts already stated. He was almost wholly careless of his body, and unconscious of his environment. Frequently he used to fall into trances when he would be totally unconscious, even of his body. Hence Hridaya used to look after him always.

At this time he was attacked with dyspepsia and therefore went to his native place for a change, accompanied by his devoted nephew. His former playmates lost in him the old jolly friend, and most of them took him to be mad, as he became very much reserved, and loved to frequent the cremation ground. But soon he got cured of his dyspepsia and came back to Dakshineswar. He now wanted to try the means prescribed in the Tantras, through proper forms for the attainment of the favour already received from his Divine Mother. A middle-aged Brahmin lady, well-versed in all the Puranas and Tantras, came at this time to the place and seeing Sri Ramakrishna, at once understood his exalted spiritual state and said that she had at last found out the man for whom she had been searching a long while. She had learned

from some supernatural source that three great souls would make their appearance in Bengal at that time. She had found out the two whom she had been destined to serve, and the third she had now got in Sri Ramakrishna.

He too was very happy in getting her opportune help, for she not only dispersed the anxiety created in his mind by people who took him to be mad, but helped him considerably in his intended project to try Tantrika means for the realization of his goal. He went through many difficult processes very successfully through the help of this wonderful lady, and by the time he was perfect master of the Tantras, she disappeared.

It is a curious thing to note that whenever he wanted to try any of the several paths leading to Truth, he always used to get an expert guide whose unexpected and well timed arrival made all things very easy for him; and no path, however difficult, would take more than three days for him to travel through. When he was trying the Tantra paths many eminent followers of Tantra used to come to him of their own accord. During this period he was once attacked with an insatiable hunger, and the wonderful Brahmana lady cured him of it by always keeping before him large quantities of various kinds of food, the constant sight of which gradually cured him of his unnatural appetite. At one time his body seemed to him to be merged in Divine glory, and such was the beauty of his person then, that people used to regard him with wonder.

When he finished the Tantrika paths, another wave rose in his mind which made him restless for

realising Sri Ramachandra and enjoying His Divine beauty. A Sannyasi who was a devoted worshipper of Sri Rama, came at this time and set him in the path. Sri Ramakrishna realized this ideal by seeing the object of his intense devotion. The Sannyasin used to worship an image of baby Rama he had with him. He presented this to his glorious disciple who saw in it the living God, and daily adored and worshipped It with so much fervour that he could never part with It, carrying It always with him wherever he went. He used to regard It as his darling, and himself as Kausalya; and such was the intensity of his feeling, that he was always living and moving in company with his beloved.

Then he became restless for Sri Krishna. Sometimes like Yasoda he would anxiously wait for his darling with butter in his hand, sometimes he would look towards Him as his beloved companion and friend, like the shepherd boys of Gokula, and would be restless for his company, sometimes he would regard himself as shepherd girl, and would anxiously wait for the much-longed-for union with the beautiful swain of Brindavan, the abode of all charm, all beauty, and all perfection, till in the intensity of his fervour and devotion, he at last brought the Infinite Lord of the Universe before him in the most charming person of sweet Sri Krishna. This incident reminds us of his beautiful saying wherein he tells that as formless water can be frozen and thus given a shape by the application of intense cold, similarly the formless and Infinite God of the Universe can be condensed and given a shape through the intense devotion of a true-lover. During this period of his life many Vaishnava

saints used to come to him to help him on, and would be helped instead.

Once Mathuranath was insisting upon God's inability to violate or withstand the natural laws before Him, to which Sri Ramakrishna objected and said that, being all-powerful, God could do whatever he liked, Mathura was not convinced, but rather argued that God could never produce two kinds of flowers in a single plant. For some business, Sri Ramakrishna went out for a while. Coming back he asked Mathura to follow him, who doing so, was brought before a flower plant on one branch of which there were two flowers of different sorts. Mathura was then convinced. This and many other wonderful incidents in connection with Sri Ramakrishna, made Mathuranath his ardent devotee and follower. For his comforts he never hesitated to spend any amount of money. He regarded him as his God. Rani Rasmani's devotion towards him was also very intense. She examined him in several ways, and was thoroughly convinced of his divine nature.

After this, Sri Ramakrishna wanted to realize the goal of a monistic Vedantin, and a Sannyasin named Tota-puri, opportunely came at the time to help him, sent as it were, by some unseen power. Guided by him, he was able to realize in three days the highest *Samadhi*, in which all idea of duality was lost. Tota-puri was astonished to see him realize within so short a period the most exalted state of superconsciousness which is altogether inaccessible to most men, and which took him forty years to attain. He therefore could not help regarding him as an extraordinary

being; and although he had come there to stay only for three days, as he was on his way to Ganga-Sagar, he remained for eleven months with his disciple.

During this period Sri Ramakrishna used to live nearly always in that transcendental plane of super-consciousness, completely separating himself from his body, which on account of this appeared nothing better than a dead one, so much so, that even birds used to come and sit upon it to pick up the grains of rice from the head where they had been put in while offering worship to the Highest Self. His hair became matted. He was irregular in his bath and forgetful of his environments the greater portion of the time.

Thus his frequent trances began to increase in their duration, so that at last he could not come down to the plane of his five senses. Hridaya was unable to succeed in making him eat anything for days and days together, and everyone was naturally anxious for his life. Most people gave him up for lost. Another Sannyasin made his appearance at this crisis. He at once found him out to be in the highest *Samadhi*, and being a Yogi himself, he knew how to bring him down. The treatment, which he thought would cure him, was of a very rude character, for it consisted in dealing heavy blows upon his person by means of a short and thick club. The Sannyasin without any delay, proceeded to his business and began to strike him heavily with the club, and excessive physical pain, thus created, brought him down to semi-consciousness for a while, when a little food used to be forced into his mouth. Sometimes no amount of beating would bring him back to consciousness. In this way it went on for

some months, and the Sannyasin too was almost becoming hopeless when to relieve his anxiety and that of all his friends, as well as for the good fortune of posterity, his body was spared, as it were, by an attack of a very acute kind of his old dyspepsia, which brought down the mind to his body.

He now found that all the various paths described in the Hindu scriptures, although they might sometimes appear as diametrically opposite, still ultimately led to the same goal. He did not rest satisfied even here; he wanted to see whether other religions of the world, such as Mahomedanism and Christianity, were different paths or not. So he first tried the former with the help of a Mahomedan teacher residing in Dumdum. He gave up going to Kali's temple, and behaved altogether like an Islamite, and at last he found out that to be as good a path to realize the truth as others he had previously tried. Once, as he was walking in an adjacent garden belonging to a wealthy gentleman of Calcutta, named Babu Yadunath Mallik, he saw that a tall airy figure was approaching him, and he at once knew Him to be Jesus, who came and was merged in him, making him transcend all his senses and taking him to the same goal at which all other religions aim. Thus he was able to know, beyond all doubt, that there were, as many paths as there were religions. As one water, although it may be termed differently by different people, such as *jal*, *pani*, *tannir*, *water*, *aqua*, etc., equally slakes the thirst of all, similarly one God, although He is differently viewed by the different nations of the world, equally fulfils the desires of all.

The sage now started for his native place with Hridaya. This time he was neither reserved nor fond of seclusion. The old jollity had again come back to him. His friends began to flock round him with all of whom he talked kindly and with great joyfulness of spirit. But his friends could not regard him as their old Gadadhara, for with all his playfulness, there was a certain solemnity about him which awed and kept them at a respectful distance.

After a few days he returned from Kamarpukur to the temple of Kali. At that time the wife of Mathuranath was seriously ill. The best physicians of the metropolis had given her up for lost. Mathuranath was distressed, and when he heard that his Baba (the name by which Mathuranath called Sri Ramakrishna) had returned, without any delay he came from Janbazaar to Dakshineswar to pay his respects to him. Sri Ramakrishna knew the trouble of his heart, and so told him kindly not to be frightened by what doctors had told, for his wife would be cured shortly. Mathura was exceedingly glad at this, for he had infinite faith in the words of his Guru and his joy knew no bounds when within a very few days his wife recovered.

During this period of his life Sri Ramakrishna used to spend most of his days with Mathura in his Janbazaar house. Both husband and wife regarded him as their God. One day the wife expressed her intention of making pilgrimages to all the holy places of Northern India, and Mathura asked the opinion of his master, who readily consented. When Mathura humbly asked him to accompany them, he gave his consent to that. At this he ordered all his

servants to make the necessary preparations for the journey.

Within a very few days the big party started on pilgrimage. A railway carriage was especially reserved for Sri Ramakrishna. Hridaya followed him to take care of his person. They soon reached Benares. After paying his respects to Sri Visvanath, Sri Ramakrishna went to visit Srimat Trilinga Swami, the famous *mauni* or silent sanyasin who disappeared a few years ago. When the Swami saw the sage of Dakshineswar, he motioned to him to sit down, and presented him his snuff box, thereby indicating his great regard for him. Sri Ramakrishna asked him whether God is one or many to which the Swami replied assuming the posture of meditation, and raising one finger, thereby indicating that when a man is silent and has no concern with the world, there is only one God to him. Then putting his fingers upon his mouth, and pointing in all directions he thereby implied that when a man talks and is thus concerned with the world, many must be his God.

Thence the party went to Allahabad. The party after a few days started for Brindavan. Here Sri Ramakrishna used to fall into trances frequently. He had now come to real Brindavan every grain of dust in which had been hallowed by the holy feet of Sri Krishna and the shepherd girls. He often used to roll in the dust, in order to purify himself and then he would be at once transported into the charming circle of Sri Krishna and his shepherd boys and girls whom he would enjoy and play with for some time and then come back to his body. There was at the time a great lady saint named Gangamata at

Brindavan. She regarded herself as one of Sri Krishna's shepherd girls, and it is said that she obtained the much-longed-for object of her devotion after a great struggle. When Sri Ramakrishna went to her hermitage to pay his respects, she at once accosted him as Dulali, meaning Radha, the chief of the shepherd girls. She took him to be a woman disguised in the body of man and did not feel any shame before him. She was so very pleased with his company, that she did not want to part with him. In the meantime, his trances were so very frequent that Mathuranath thought, unless he were soon removed from Brindavan, he might go out of his body once for all. So he hastened to start back for Calcutta.

On their way from the metropolis the train halted near Vaidyanath for a while. There Sri Ramakrishna was very much affected by the sight of many poor, emaciated human figures, and told Mathuranath that unless he gave them food and clothing he would not leave that place. There was nothing which the noble-minded son-in-law of Rani Rasmani could not do for him. With all his party he got down there, and ordered food to be prepared and served to as many poor people as could be found. Thousands and thousands of these poor wretches began to flock from the surrounding countries hearing through tom-tom, about it. When Sri Ramakrishna saw that all the poor people had been given food and clothing, he was perfectly satisfied. Then the party came back to Calcutta. The whole trip cost Mathura more than a lakh of rupees.

All his struggles were now ended. He had realized his goal. At this time his wife had been staying in Dakshineswar, and having attained maiden-hood it,

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was the duty of Sri Ramakrishna to accept her as his wife according to the law; but instead of doing that he one day went to her, and worshipped her with flowers and incense, regarding her as the Mother of the Universe. Srimati Saradadevi looked upon him as her child and thenceforward began to regard him as more than divine.

After coming back to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna used to go to pay his respects to such people as were revered and honoured by many for their noble and unselfish character; for he believed them to have a little of divinity in them, and so by honouring and worshipping them, he virtually honoured and worshipped God. From his boyhood he had a taste for hearing religious plays, and making *Bhajana*; so invited or uninvited, he used to go and grace such gatherings by his holy presence. There was a great Vaishnava saint, named Bhagavandas living at Kalna. He went with Mathuranath to see him. He heard from many people about the religious fervour of Babu Kesabchandra Sen and naturally wanted to see him; so one day, accompanied by Hridaya, he went to visit him in a certain garden at Belgharia, two miles east of Dakshineswar. Keshab had come there with his party for a picnic. After having taken their meals they were resting, when Sri Ramakrishna made his appearance. As soon as he saw the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, he fell into a semi-conscious state, which he always used to have when he came in contact, for the first time, with a man of exalted character. After looking at him for a few seconds he smiled and said, "Friend, I see your tail has dropped down." All except Keshab, hearing this uncalled-for

and incoherent remark from the stranger, took him to be a madcap and laughed at him. But Keshab checked them and with true humility, which was natural to him, asked Sri Ramakrishna what he meant by his remarks. The sage replied, "As when tadpoles drop their tails then alone they become amphibious, i. e., can live both on land and in water, similarly you have dropped the tail of ignorance and that is the reason why you can live both in and out of the world." Hearing this all admired him and felt ashamed of their former rashness. From that time forward Keshab became very much attached to him. He paid a return visit one day to Dakshineswar and Sri Ramakrishna accorded him a very loving reception. Gradually Keshab's reverence towards him increased so much that he would not sit before him first on any seat, but would wait for hours and hours together hearing the sweet and ennobling words flowing out of his holy mouth like nectar.

It was Keshab that first published his name in his paper called "The New Dispensation". The English-knowing public thus came to know about him, and high officials, clerks and students began to flock round him. When Sri Ramakrishna heard that Mr. Sen had published his name in the newspapers, he was very much displeased, for he did not care to have any name or fame for himself. He used to say to his Divine Mother, "Mother, let all name and fame be Keshab's, but let my intense devotion always flow towards Thee."

Many young students from schools and colleges, reading his name in the paper went to see him, and he always used to talk kindly with them. He especially loved young boys, for he said, "As a fruit that has not

been pecked by crows or other birds is the best offering for the Gods, similarly the young men whom the ravens of sensuality and worldliness have not yet preyed upon, are more fit to be offered to God, than others. Religion should be practised even from boyhood, for a tender branch can be bent in any direction, but such is not the case with a strong and grown-up one."

Among the students who flocked round him he liked Narendranath most of all, for he saw in him the future great man, and so accorded him the highest seat; this student is now known as the great world honoured Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna had the peculiar power of knowing everything about a man at first sight. According to him very few people are destined to realise true religion in this life. Unless the desire for sensual enjoyment completely leaves a man, which can only be possible to him if he has been satiated with all such contact-born pleasures in his previous births, he is not qualified to realize the grandeur of truth. So, although innumerable boys used to come to him, he selected only a very few and initiated them into the mysteries of higher religion, which will always remain as night to the worldly-minded.

He used to instruct his disciples according to their different qualifications and tendencies. Some he would ask to meditate upon God without any form, some he would tell to have strong devotion towards God with form, such as Siva, Vishnu, Krishna, etc., as to him all religions of the world were different paths leading to the same goal, God, who may be known differently by different people, as God, *Allah, Jehovah, Iswara,*

etc. He always used to advise the follower of every religion to stick to his particular path. As an illustration he used to give this parable: Once upon a time a man wanted to sink a well and someone advised him to dig in a certain spot, and he did so. But after sinking fifteen cubits, when he found no water coming out, he got disgusted. In the meantime another man came and laughing at his foolish attempt advised him to dig in another spot which he knew to be the best. So the man went and resumed his labour there. This time he went down twenty cubits, but no water was found. A third man came and asked him to try in another and better place which he would point out to him. He followed and a certain spot was shown to him. He went on sinking and sinking till thirty cubits were reached and in utter disgust he was going to give up the task, when a fourth man came up to him, smiling sweetly and said, "My child, you have laboured much indeed, but being misdirected all these labours have been of no use to you. Very well, kindly follow me, and I will take you to a spot where if you only touch your spade to the ground, water will flow out in torrents." The temptation was too much for him and so he followed the fourth man and did according to his advice. He went on digging expecting every moment the gushing out of water till he patiently sank twenty cubits, but also! no water came. Then utterly discouraged he gave up the task altogether. By this time he had sunk eighty-five cubits. But if he had the patience and perseverance to sink half the number of cubits in one place, he would surely have been successful. Similarly, men who cannot stick to their own religion, and always hastily court one religion after another, at

last turn out to be atheists in their old age, giving up religion altogether.

Every religion is perfect in itself. Therefore a man should stick to the religion in which he is born, without hating the votaries of other religions, deeming them to be destined to go to hell, while he alone being the favoured child of God is intended for Heaven. As an illustration to this he used to tell us the parable of a daughter-in-law. As in a household the good daughter-in-law honours and respects her father-in-law, mother-in-law, her own father and mother, and loves her relatives and friends, but her especial love flows freely towards her husband, with whom alone she shares her bed, similarly a man should honour and respect other religions, but stick to and practise his own religion with chastity of spirit.

The latter portion of Sri Ramakrishna's life was spent in imparting these noble truths with whomsoever he used to come in contact. He has now allotted this task to his disciples, the chief among whom, the Swami Vivekananda, is nobly carrying out his Master's behest preaching his gospel of universal tolerance and sympathy to all men and women of the world. This is the grand mission which we have brought from him, my dear friends, for your acceptance, and salvation.

I need not dwell upon the latter portion of Sri Ramakrishna's divine life. I hope I have sufficiently brought him before you to give you a rough view of the Divine Man, as well as the universal doctrine which he came to preach. According to him we must combine orthodoxy with liberalism. The spirit of the age is such as refuses to think that Truth can be the monopoly of a single individual or nation. Science has

taught us this grandest lesson, and so in Sri Ramakrishna we see the marriage of religion with science.

And this is exactly the spirit of Hinduism or the religion eternal, one of whose grandest exponents sang :—

“Whoever comes to take refuge in me through whatever path, I exactly suit myself to his requirements. All people follow my path alone, O, Partha.”

This universal doctrine is exactly compatible with the infinite nature of the Lord of the Universe. So bigotry, narrow-mindedness, and fanaticism have nothing to do with true religion. Let the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna be upon all of us on this auspicious day to enable us to realise the Truth Eternal by saving us from the foul clutch of narrowness and bigotry. Let us all profit by the noble example of his glorious life, through His grace.

Sri Ramakrishna represents Truth, and as Truth is not bound in time and space, so the great Saint of the modern age is not limited temporally or spatially. His life has now only begun, and it is destined to shine through all men and women of the world in the near future, when, as the Swami Vivekananda says, on the banners of all religions will be written, “Help, and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissension,” when all men and women will learn to regard one another as brothers and sisters, and thus live harmoniously allowing everyone to view, worship, and love the Infinite God of all, according to his own capacity and choice. Let us all struggle our best to bring about the existence of such a blessed time, as soon as possible, and make Sri Ramakrishna shine in all in his perfect glory.

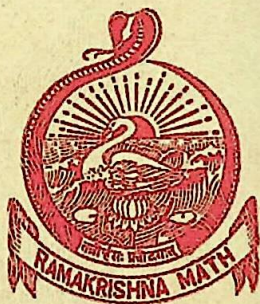
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